

Ex-ante Evaluation
of the transnational cooperation programme
CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020

Final evaluation report

This report is conducted within the framework of the Ex-ante Evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the transnational cooperation programme CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020 co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

Information on the development of the programme of the transnational cooperation programme CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020 can be found on www.central2020.eu.

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Abstract

The consortium partners blue! GbR and DSN have been commissioned by the Managing Authority (MA) of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme to conduct the ex-ante evaluation and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Cooperation Programme (CP) CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020. The ex-ante evaluation and programming processes were closely coordinated and followed a highly interactive, iterative and participative approach.

As for the programme's strategy, the ex-ante evaluation assessed that the strategy fully complies with the Common Strategic Framework (CSF¹) and that the principle of thematic focussing has been safeguarded. The strategy is clearly linked to the challenges and needs as identified in the regional analysis of the central Europe territory. A good internal coherence has been ensured through a logical deduction of the specific objectives from thematic objectives and investment priorities pre-defined by the regulations². All assessment criteria referring to external coherence with other instruments have been evaluated positively. The scope of the instruments dealt with in the Cooperation Programme is considered sufficient. The coordination mechanisms focus on different levels and are likely to be successfully achievable. The criteria for presenting an integrated approach to territorial development are fully met. The intervention logic of the CE 2020 Programme is characterised by clear causal links. For all four priority axes the relevant target groups as well as the beneficiaries are described in an appropriate and precise way.

An overall suitable indicator system has been set up, composed of programme specific output indicators covering well the main outputs of the programme as well as result indicators which reflect the expected results. The components of the Performance Framework comply with the formal requirements as laid down in the relevant regulations³.

The human resources and administrative capacity are considered appropriate for the management of the CE 2020 Programme. The tasks of each programme body as specified in the CP CE 2020 are in line with the relevant regulations⁴. The procedures for monitoring the programme and for collecting the data necessary to carry out evaluations are well developed and thus are considered adequate.

With regards to the consistency of the financial allocations, the distribution of shares corresponds well to the relevance of the programme objectives. As the financial allocations are based on the results of the regional analysis and are in line with the EC country position papers, they fully comply with the CPR.

¹ Common Strategic Framework: Annex 1 of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) (see footnote 2: COM (2013): REGULATION (EU) no. 1303/2013

² REGULATION (EU) No. 1303/2013 of 17 December 2013 and REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013 of 17 December 2013

³ REGULATION (EU) No. 1303/2013 of 17 December 2013, Annex II and Regulation (EU) No 215/2014 of 7 March 2014

⁴ REGULATION (EU) No. 1303/2013 of 17 December 2013 and REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013

For assessment of compliance with and contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy, a cross-reference analysis had been carried out. It is obvious that the CE 2020 Programme will have stronger contributions to the dimensions of smart and sustainable growth rather than to the inclusive dimension. The programme will contribute to Europe 2020 in accordance with the possibilities, mechanisms and effectiveness of a transnational cooperation programme.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment has been carried out in compliance with the SEA Directive. The operations to be supported by the programme have been assessed to have presumably a positive impact on the selected environmental issues and cross-cutting themes. Furthermore, the national environmental authorities and the public have been adequately consulted and the monitoring system is likely to identify unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage.

Due to the close and interactive cooperation between the evaluators, the CP drafting team and the programme bodies and due to the active role that the evaluators were given in the Steering group sessions, the CP development process can be described as constructive, consensus-oriented and forward looking. Both the ex-ante evaluation as well as the SEA has resulted in a full acceptance of the CP as it meets all necessary criteria.

Technical Summary

The Cooperation Programme CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020 (CP CE 2020) is a European Territorial Cooperation Programme. According to the Common Provisions Regulation⁵ (CPR), an ex-ante evaluation must be carried out as part of the programming procedure of the CP CE 2020

The consortium partners blue! GbR and DSN have been commissioned by the Managing Authority (MA) of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme to conduct the ex-ante evaluation and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the CP CE 2020.

The ex-ante evaluation process (cf. chapter 4) and programming processes were closely coordinated and followed a highly interactive and iterative approach. There was constant dialogue with the relevant programme bodies. Ex-ante recommendations and feedback on the CP drafts were provided by means of the reporting system, which consisted of different elements such as intermediate evaluation reports. The Executive Summary will present the main final results of the evaluation while the more specific and intermediate recommendations and findings that were contributed to the overall CP development programme are listed in the main document.

The framework of the ex-ante evaluation is specified in Article 55.3 of the Common Provisions Regulation which lists all relevant key elements. In line with the current requirements for ex-ante evaluations of the Cohesion Policy Programmes 2014-2020 as well as the information provided in the guidance given in the EC guidance document on ex-ante evaluation⁶, scope and structure of the ex-ante evaluation must be specified on the basis of five main components. These five components were further sub-structured into 56 evaluation questions that allowed the ex-ante evaluation of a European Territorial Cooperation Programme. The structure of the main evaluation report mirrors this “red thread” that also represents the structure of the overall development process of the CP.

During the evaluation process the ex-ante evaluator developed a set of formal recommendations as well as various suggestions for improvement targeting at an improved consistency of the programme objectives with the Europe 2020 Strategy and the CSF⁷. The CP in its different draft versions has well progressed and all interim recommendations have satisfactorily been integrated. Detailed information on the uptake of the evaluator’s recommendations during the process can be found in Annex B (recommendation tracker).

Following the five main evaluation components, the following evaluation results can be summarised:

⁵ cf. COM (2013): REGULATION (EU) No. 1303/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

⁶ cf. COM (2013): GUIDANCE DOCUMENT ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION – EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND AND COHESION FUND

⁷ Common Strategic Framework: Annex 1 of the Common Provisions Regulation (see footnote 2: COM (2013): REGULATION (EU) no. 1303/2013

Component 1 (C1) Programme strategy

Regarding the derivation of the programme strategy, the CSF calls for a need-driven and performance-oriented approach. The CENTRAL EUROPE Programme has undertaken a very comprehensive territorial analysis in order to define the relevant territorial challenges and policy needs of the CE 2020 programme area⁸. In the final CP, a thorough and sound socio-economic analysis is presented, which serves as an anchor point for strategy development. The territorial challenges and needs of the programme area are clearly identified and backed by evidence from the comprehensive document analysis as well as an intensive stakeholder involvement process. The CE 2020 strategy has taken into account all necessary requirements that provide ground and justification for the strategy⁹.

It can be stated, that the final CP of the CE 2020 Programme is fully consistent with the Europe 2020 Strategy and the CSF:

- The strategy of the CE 2020 Programme, as presented in the final CP of the Cooperation Programme, clearly addresses the new growth targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy.
- The strategy responds to the challenges and needs as identified in the territorial analysis considering the potentials of transnational cooperation
- The programme strategy fully complies with the CSF; the principle of thematic focussing as laid out in the ETC regulation, Art. 5¹⁰, has been safeguarded.
- In line with Article 8 (2 (a)) of the ETC regulation, the programme strategy and the programme's contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as well as to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion are well described.

Internal Coherence

Regarding the final CP, the appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- The CP model has been filled in formally correct in line with the regulations¹¹.
- The deduction of specific objectives from the thematic objectives and investments priorities of the CSF are straightforward and coherent in all priority axes. The selected IPs are successfully translated into specific objectives with appropriate references to the territorial types addressed.

⁸ cf.: CE (2012): Results of the regional analysis Document analysis, online survey, interviews, SWOT, 4 September 2012.

⁹ In context of the Partnership Agreements the CSF highlights the “need to programme the CSF Funds taking into account the most recent relevant country-specific recommendations issued by the Council on the basis of Articles 121(2) and 148(4) TFEU and reflecting their National Reform Programmes” (CSF p. 6)

¹⁰ cf. COM (2013): REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal

¹¹ COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) No 288/2014 of 25 February 2014

- Potential antagonistic effects of the specific objectives of the CE 2020 Programme strategy were not identified, but rather far-reaching thematic compliance and several potential synergies within single priority axes and also between them.

External Coherence

The appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- The coordination mechanisms with other instruments mentioned in the CP take into account the provisions laid down in the CSF as set out in Annex I of the CPR. The scope of the instruments dealt with in the Cooperation Programme is considered sufficient. The coordination mechanisms focus on different levels and are likely to be successfully achievable.
- With Section 4 and the information provided in Section 2 on the “Specific territories targeted” (for each priority axis) the CP fully meets the requirements of presenting a mature integrated approach to territorial development in central Europe.
- The CE 2020 Programme has a vast potential to create leverage effects and synergies with activities which would not have occurred without EU assistance.

Linkages between supported actions, expected outputs and results

In line with the theory of change¹², at result level the CE 2020 Programmes focusses on results which are likely to be achieved by a TN cooperation programme. Consequently the term “capacities” often comes to the fore. Here, it has to be pointed out that the final CP provides an appropriate definition of the term (in Annex 02 of the CP – Glossary). Together with the further information provided on the types of outputs and the actions (including their examples) the presented intervention logic is considered as fully comprehensible and adequate.

Following findings of the ex-ante evaluator regarding the different priority axes can be highlighted:

Priority axis 1 (TO 1) – SO 1.1 and SO 1.2: With priority axis 1, the CE 2020 Programme targets two different, clearly distinguishable objectives – both of key relevance for increasing the competitiveness and innovation capacity in central Europe. Firstly, the innovation systems are targeted, namely the linkages among their actors, with related actions covering e.g. establishing transnational innovation networks and clusters, new links and cooperation between relevant actors in central Europe and also covering direct transfer processes, policies, services etc. (SO 1.1). The second objective aims at improving skills and entrepreneurial competences for advancing innovation (SO 1.2) by appropriate means described along different actions such as strengthening competences and skills for the application of novel technologies as well as focussing on social innovation. Thus, a sufficient distinction at level of the objectives is presented, underpinned by particular linkages between the different elements which follow a clear logical chain.

¹² cf. COM GUIDANCE DOCUMENT ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION – EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND AND COHESION FUND, p. 6-7

Priority axis 2 (TO 4) – SO 2.1, SO 2.2 and SO 2.3: Priority axis 2 comprises a set of objectives, which all aim at improved capacities of the public sector and related entities for a shift towards a low-carbon economy. Three different fields of interventions are considered most relevant for central Europe: 1) increased energy efficiency and renewable energy use of public infrastructures, 2) territorially based low-carbon energy planning and policies, 3) low carbon mobility planning in functional urban areas. Possible actions are described specifically for each of the different objectives, considering various different opportunities how to achieve the envisaged results. The relevant regional focus is often emphasised as well as the added value of measures at transnational level.

Priority axis 3 (TO 6) – SO 3.1, SO 3.2 and SO 3.3: Priority axis 3 divides the twofold approach of cooperating on natural and cultural resources into three objectives – addressing improved capacities for integrated environmental management approaches as well as the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources (SO 3.2). The environmental dimension is split into two objectives, one targeting the sustainable use and protection of natural resources and heritage (SO 3.1) and the second one targeting relevant topics of environmental management in urban functional areas (SO 3.3), such as environmental quality comprising air, water, waste, soil and climate. Under this priority axis, a relatively wide set of actions is compiled which is backed by the success of interventions under the preceding programme CE 2007-2013. All actions can be clearly assigned to the objectives and no significant overlaps occur.

Priority axis 4 (TO 7) – SO 4.1 and SO 4.2: With priority axis 4 the CE 2020 Programme successfully fills a specific niche of intervention by TNC in the field of connectivity. SO 4.1, addressing the improved planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems, puts its emphasis on relevant coordination aspects which can be well served by TNC operations. A high added value is guaranteed by the envisaged measures for linking sustainable passenger transport to the TEN-T network. With its specific scope, well underpinned by the envisaged actions, a clear distinction and high complementarity to SO 2.3 (urban mobility) is given. The elements presented under SO 4.2., addressing coordination among freight transport stakeholders with a strong focus on multimodal environmentally-friendly solutions, show a high permeability and the envisaged achievements appear most likely for TNC operations.

Regarding the final CP, the appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- The intervention logic of the CE 2020 Programme is characterised by clear causal links. The information provided is deemed adequate and sufficiently precise.
- For all four priority axes the relevant target groups as well as the beneficiaries are described in an appropriate and precise way, considering the most relevant mechanisms and opportunities of the programme's intervention logic as well as the effectiveness of a TNC programme in each priority axis.
- Sufficient evidence is provided; choices are backed by previous experience and evaluations/studies.
- The CE 2020 Programme follows and supports an integrated territorial approach in its intervention logic that is in line with identified territorial challenges and needs of the programme area.

Horizontal principles

Regarding the final CP, the appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- The CE 2020 strategy ensures equal opportunities at programme and operation level. Concrete activities and actions target at the encouragement of actively promoting gender mainstreaming or integrating equal participation of women and men. At programme level, a self-assessment exercise with regards to gender mainstreaming is provided for.

The strategy refers to the objective to prevent discrimination on operation and programme level and non-discrimination principles are anchored successfully.

- The programme recognises sustainable development as a key principle and is committed to it. In the programme preparation stage a SEA was conducted and therein made recommendations integrated. Furthermore a sustainable development of the central Europe territory is promoted through the foreseen programme strategy. In addition, the sustainability will also be considered as criterion in the selection of operations and operations will have to report on it.
- By implementing a Strategic Environmental Assessment the CE 2020 Programme adheres to the requirement of considering the cross-cutting sustainable development principle (defined in Article 8 CPR).

Component 2 (C2) Indicators, monitoring and evaluation

The indicator system of the CP CE 2020 consists of different indicator types serving different purposes. Programme-specific result indicators have been determined for each of the 10 specific objectives within priority axes 1-4. Beside this, a set of programme-specific output indicators have been determined for each of the seven selected investment priorities. These indicators have been developed on basis of an output typology which specifies different output types. By adapting their focus to the specific objective of each investment priority, the output indicators have been further specified. Apart from that common output indicators have been selected for priority axes 1-4.

With regard to priority axis 5 (Technical Assistance) programme-specific output indicators have been determined.

Regarding the final CP, the appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- The programme-specific result indicators are consistent with the corresponding investment priority.
- The programme-specific result indicators cover the most important changes aimed at within the corresponding specific objective and are relevant to measuring the progress towards achieving the changes intended by the Cooperation Programme CE 2020.
- The programme-specific output indicators are relevant to the actions which are to be supported.
- The selected common output indicators are appropriate for priority axes 1-4.
- The chosen programme-specific result and output indicators have clear titles.
- Definitions of the programme-specific result and output indicators are provided in Annex 08 of the final CP .
- With regard to the selected method of data collection, it can be deduced that the programme-specific result indicators are robust against outliers.
- Baselines will be collected for the programme-specific result indicators. Due to the non-availability of required data and the time needed for data collection via the foreseen surveys and focus groups approaches data for the baseline cannot be included at the time CP submission.
- To measure the progress of the result indicators data will be gathered at three different times during the programme implementation. Reasonable methods will be applied to collect the data.
- The target values of the programme-specific output indicators and the common output indicators seem realistic.

For each priority axis a Performance Framework has been established in the final CP. Each Performance Framework consists of the following components: two or three aggregated output indicators, one financial indicator and one key implementation step.

Regarding the final CP, the appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- The approach for setting-up the Performance Framework is well justified as described within the Annex 08 of the final CP.
- The components of the Performance Framework comply with the formal requirements as laid down in the COM Common Provision Regulation, Annex II and COM Commission Implementing Regulation¹³.
- The composition of the Performance Framework seems reasonable and its components capture relevant information on the progress of each priority axis.

¹³ cf. COM (2014): Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 215/2014. 7 March 2014

- The final target values of approved operations seem to be realistic and achievable.

With regard to the human resources and administrative capacity it can be stated that they are appropriate for the management of the CE 2020 Programme. Regarding the final CP, the appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- The tasks of each programme body as specified in the Cooperation Programme for the next programme period are in line with the Common Provision Regulation and the European Territorial Cooperation Regulation.
- The fact that the functions of the Certifying Authority (CA) will be carried out by the Managing Authority (MA) in the future programme is not associated with significant problems.
- The evaluation revealed that the human resources are sufficient to fulfil the tasks of the JS.

The procedures for monitoring the programme and for collecting the data necessary to carry out evaluations are adequate. Regarding the final CP, the appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- With regard to the monitoring and collection of data, the data sources and the methods for data collection have been defined by the CP CE 2020.
- The CE 2020 Programme ensures the quality of data by description and definition of a number of aspects for each indicator (measurement unit, baseline value and baseline year, target value, source of data, frequency of reporting, definition of the content).
- The system for monitoring operation progress of the CE 2020 Programme will be based on the principles of content and financial monitoring as already applied in the current programme, but will also integrate improvements and preventive measures designed to reduce administrative burden for the operation partners.

Component 3 (C3) Consistency of financial allocations

It can be stated that the financial allocations are consistent:

- The distribution of shares corresponds well to the relevance of programme objectives and is in line with identified challenges and needs:
- For priority axis 1 – 4:
 - shares well reflect the specific features and financial needs to be expected from operations
 - take into account experiences and lessons learnt
 - Take into account input from stakeholder workshops, which were part of the programming phase
- The financial allocations are based on the regional analysis and are in line with the EC country position papers. Thus they fully comply with the CPR.

- For priority axis 5 (Technical Assistance), it can be stated that taking into account experiences from the current programme as well as envisaged tasks of the implementation structure, the budget share is sufficient to manage and communicate the programme well.

Component 4 (C4) Contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy

Based on the cross-reference analysis of the CE 2020 Programme Investment Strategy with links and likely contributions to the Europe 2020 targets, the following conclusions can be drawn:

The CE 2020 Programme will have stronger contributions to the dimensions of smart and sustainable growth (rather than to the inclusive dimension). References to R&D and the energy/climate change targets appear strongest, but due to the integrated and catalytic character of the TNC programmes also effects on the employment/education as well as poverty targets can be expected.

Also referring to the technical specification of the programme's goal as presented in the final CP (p. 10) – “Transnational cooperation in central Europe is the catalyst for implementing smart solutions answering to regional challenges in the fields of innovation, low carbon economy, environment, culture and transport. It builds regional capacities following an integrated bottom-up approach involving and coordinating relevant actors from all governance levels” – thus, it can be stated that the CE 2020 Programme successfully addresses the challenges and needs of the programme area and will contribute to Europe 2020 in accordance with the possibilities, mechanism and effectiveness of a TNC programme.

Component 5 (C5) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

According to the SEA Directive EU/2001/42 a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was implemented as part of the programming procedure of the CP CE 2020. The SEA aimed to assess the potential effects of the CP CE 2020 on the environment. The implementation of the SEA during the preparation of the programme ensured directly the integration of environmental considerations into the CP CE 2020 on basis of the feedback gathered within the consultations process in the programme area.

A short description of the main environmental effects on each priority axis identified within the environmental assessment:

Priority axis 1: Building and increasing capacities and know-how in the innovation sector will likely have no significant effect on the environment. Amongst other issues, however, the build-up of skills and competences in the field of eco- and social innovation as well of low-carbon solutions could affect almost all environmental issues¹⁴ in a positive way.

Priority axis 2: Building and increasing capacities for low carbon strategies in different fields will contribute to a reduction of emissions and thus to climate change mitigation. This has in particular a positive effect on the environmental issues: “Air and Climate”, “Population and Human Health”, “Flora, Fauna and Biodiversity”. With regard to the usage

¹⁴ The selected environmental issues are „Water“, „Soil“, Flora, Fauna and Biodiversity“, “Cultural Heritage and Landscape“, “Air and Climate” and “Population and Human Health”.

of renewable energy resources single possible negative effects could possibly occur on several environmental issues.

Priority axis 3: Building and increasing capacities for the improvement of the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources will likely have a possible positive effect on all environmental issues. The promotion of integrated (environmental) approaches with focus on sustainable use will likely contribute to a reduction of external pressures and usage conflicts and thus contributes to protect the natural and cultural resources.

Priority axis 4: Building and increasing capacities for the improvement of transports systems with focus on the promotion of regional public transport and multimodal environment-friendly freight solutions will likely have possible positive effects in particular on “Air and Climate” and “Population and Human Health”. Due to this focus possible environmental effects will likely not occur for most of the other environmental issues. However, with regard to the environmental issue water, it has to be considered that the promotion of this transport mode could contribute to increased water pollution as well as to adverse effects on hydromorphology.

With regard to the mentioned possible negative effects, obligatory recommendations were provided in the environmental report in order to ensure that the CP CE 2020 will not affect the environment in a negative way. These recommendations were taken up and integrated in the CP CE 2020. Thus, as consequence, the implementation of the CE programme should have positive effects on the environment and possible negative effects are being avoided.

According to the SEA Directive EU/2001/42 the environmental authorities as well as the public of each Member State were consulted within the SEA of the CP CE 2020. The SEA consultation process was carried out within two main steps. At the first step the environmental authorities of the participating Member States were invited to review the draft scoping report. The feedback was integrated into the final scoping report. With regard to the second step, the national environmental authorities and the public were invited to provide their feedback on the CP CE 2020 and the draft environmental report. The information gathered in the framework of this consultation was taken into account in the preparation of the programme by the MA/JTS.

To summarise, it can be stated:

- The implementation of operations within the specific objectives of the cooperation programme CE2020 will likely have positive impacts on the selected environmental issues and cross-cutting themes¹⁵.
- Recommendations provided within the environmental assessment were taken up and integrated in the CP CE 2020. Thus negative effects are being avoided.
- The national environmental authorities and the public have been adequately involved in the SEA process.
- A reasonable monitoring system is foreseen to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.

¹⁵ The selected cross-cutting themes are „Energy resources“, „Waste and Material Resources“ and “Mobility and Transport”.

1. Introduction

The Cooperation Programme CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020 (CP CE 2020) belongs to the European Territorial Cooperation objective of the Cohesion Policy for the 2014-2020 period. According to the Common Provisions Regulation¹⁶ (CPR), an ex-ante evaluation must be carried out as part of the programming procedure of the CP CE 2020.

The ex-ante evaluation aims to improve the quality of the CP CE 2020, and to “verify whether its objectives and targets can be reached”¹⁷.

The consortium partners blue! GbR and DSN have been commissioned by the Managing Authority (MA) of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme to conduct the ex-ante evaluation and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the CP CE 2020.

This is the final evaluation report of the ex-ante evaluation of the CP CE 2020. The report presents the main methodologies of the ex-ante evaluation, the evaluation process and evaluation principles as well as the main results and recommendations regarding the following evaluation components: Programme strategy; Indicators, monitoring and evaluation; Consistency of financial allocations; Contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy. Furthermore, the report briefly presents the results of the SEA.

This final evaluation report targets the final version of the CP CE 2020:

Final CP, submitted on the 14th of November 2014

The ex-ante evaluation process (cf. chapter 4) and programming processes were closely coordinated and followed a highly interactive and iterative approach. There was constant dialogue with the relevant programme bodies. Ex-ante recommendations and feedback on the CP drafts were provided by means of the reporting system, which consisted of different elements such as intermediate evaluation reports.

¹⁶ cf. COM (2013): REGULATION (EU) No. 1303/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

¹⁷ *ibid*

2. Scope of the ex-ante evaluation

The framework of the ex-ante evaluation is specified in Article 55.3 of the Common Provisions Regulation which lists all relevant key elements.

In line with the current requirements for ex-ante evaluations of the Cohesion Policy Programmes 2014-2020 as well as the information provided in the guidance given in the EC guidance document on ex-ante evaluation¹⁸, scope and structure of the ex-ante evaluation must be specified on the basis of five main components (see Figure 1).

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Component 1 (C1) | Programme strategy |
| Component 2 (C2) | Indicators, monitoring and evaluation |
| Component 3 (C3) | Consistency of financial allocations |
| Component 4 (C4) | Contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy |
| Component 5 (C5) | Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) |

Figure 1: The ex-ante evaluation CE 2020 components

Source: blue! | DSN, 2013

The table below illustrates, how the evaluation requirements specified by CPR Art. 55.3 (a)-(n) are assigned to the five evaluation components. Components 1, 2, 3 and 4 are closely interconnected.

| Components | According to Article 55 (3) of CPR | THEME/SUB-THEME |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| 1 Programme Strategy | | CONSISTENCY |
| | (a) | Challenges and needs in relation to Europe 2020 objectives |
| | (d) | Consistency of programme objectives with challenges and needs |
| and | | |
| 4 Contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy | | COHERENCE |
| | (b) | Internal Coherence |
| | (b) | Relation with other relevant instruments |
| and | (f) + (h) | Linkage between supported operations, expected outputs and results |
| 3 Consistency of financial allocations | (l) | Horizontal principles – mainly equal opportunities |
| | (c) | Consistency of financial allocations |

¹⁸ cf. COM (2013): GUIDANCE DOCUMENT ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION – EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND AND COHESION FUND

| Components | According to Article 55 (3) of CPR | THEME/SUB-THEME |
|--|------------------------------------|--|
| 2 Indicators, Monitoring and Evaluation | (e) | Relevance and clarity of proposed programme indicators ¹⁹ |
| | (g) | Quantified baseline and target values |
| | (k) | Suitability of milestones |
| | (i) and (j) | Administrative capacity, data collection procedures and evaluation |
| | (n) | Reduction of the administrative burden on beneficiaries |
| 5 SEA | (m) + 55 (3) | Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) |

Figure 2: The ex-ante evaluation CE 2020 components, themes and sub-themes

Source: blue! | DSN, 2013

The evaluation questions for all components/themes/sub-themes were derived on the basis of this evaluation framework. An overview of the evaluation questions is provided in Annex A in this evaluation report.

3. Methodology

In order to address the specific characteristics of the transnational cooperation programme CE 2020 and to deliver high quality evaluation results, the evaluation team has designed and implemented a two-fold evaluation approach. Complementary to state-of-the-art evaluation methods for document analysis (which address the relevant reference and background documents), the evaluation is based on participative elements of expert involvement, which provide the ex-ante evaluation results with greater validity and ownership.

Document analysis with data analysis tools

The approach for document analysis comprised different desk research and analysis methods. Examples of applied analysis tools are described in the following:

- Document review/desk research: The ex-ante evaluation is based on a set of reference documents (e.g. Europe 2020, relevant regulations, CSF²⁰ etc.) which are referred to systematically.
- Matching analyses: A matrix has been designed, which allows the filtering of e.g. statements of the programme's strategic choices with the objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy.

¹⁹ At this point the relevance of the chosen common indicators as well as the relevance and clarity of the other programme specific indicators proposed have been assessed.

²⁰ Common Strategic Framework: Annex 1 of the Common Provisions Regulation (see footnote 2: COM (2013): REGULATION (EU) no. 1303/2013)

- Systematic utilisation of lessons-learned and findings made in previous evaluations by means of a structured content analysis and the assessment of the integration of the main findings and recommendations of previous evaluations into programme drafts.

Furthermore, other data analysis techniques such as tracking tables and benchmarking analyses as well as analyses based on a logical-framework approach were applied within the evaluation.

Expert involvement and participative elements

The design of the participative elements carried out by the evaluation team considers the different functions associated with the involvement of experts and stakeholders throughout the evaluation.

The objectives of involving the intended stakeholders and experts are to:

- gain a deeper insight into complex subjects and relevant interdependencies,
- support the evaluation findings through additional expert assessment,
- create further ownership for the evaluation findings,
- incorporate expert opinions and validate recommendations,
- unleash further creative potential within the expert community.

The previous analytical steps noted above formed the basis for the development of the participative elements. Within this ex-ante evaluation, 64 telephone interviews were carried out. Since the ex-ante evaluation was conducted in parallel and iteratively to the drafting of the CP, the interviews were carried out at different stages of the programming process.

In order to fulfil the requirements of the CE 2020 ex-ante evaluation, three different interview types were conducted. Each type had a different purpose and fulfilled various functions within the evaluation.

The following figure provides an overview of the different interview types:

| Type of Interview | Number of Interviews | Timeframe |
|---|----------------------|------------------|
| Explorative interviews | 9 | March-April 2013 |
| Thematic interviews | 42 | July-August 2013 |
| Interviews on different evaluation components | 13 | November 2013 |

Figure 3: Interview overview - ex-ante evaluation CE 2020

Source: blue! | DSN, 2013

Explorative interviews

Nine explorative interviews with one SG Member from each Member State (MS) participating in the Programme were carried out in the initial phase of the evaluation (March and April 2013) (cf. Annex C, list of interviewees). These interviews focused on different subjects of the programming process and the derivation of the programme strategy. The results were included in the assessment of the evaluation questions in the 1st intermediate evaluation report (cf. Section 4).

Thematic interviews

A set of standardised interviews with 42 thematic experts from the Member States participating in the Programme were conducted. These interview partners, i.e. four thematic experts (one expert for each priority axis)²¹ per Member State, were selected by the SG Members. In addition, four experts with expertise at the European level in one of the priority axes respectively (cf. Annex C, list of interviewees) were interviewed. All interviews were carried out in the period from end of July until end of August 2013. The interviews focussed on the intervention logic of the different priority axes, in particular on the relevance of actions and external factors influencing the attainment/non-attainment of specific objectives as well as on the measurability of programme outputs and results. The outcomes of the thematic interviews formed part of the assessment of the evaluation questions in the 2nd intermediate evaluation report (cf. Section 4).

Interviews on different evaluation components

A set of 13 interviews with a focus on different evaluation components was conducted in November 2013 (cf. Annex C, list of interviewees). Four interviews focussed on indicators, three on implementing provisions and six on external coherence. The outcomes of each interview were integrated into the 3rd intermediate evaluation report.

With regards to the interviews on indicators, three experts at the European level and two representatives of the JTS of the CE 2007-2013 Programme were interviewed. The interviews focussed on key aspects of the ex-ante evaluation of indicators, so as to obtain additional expert input for the ex-ante evaluation of this component.

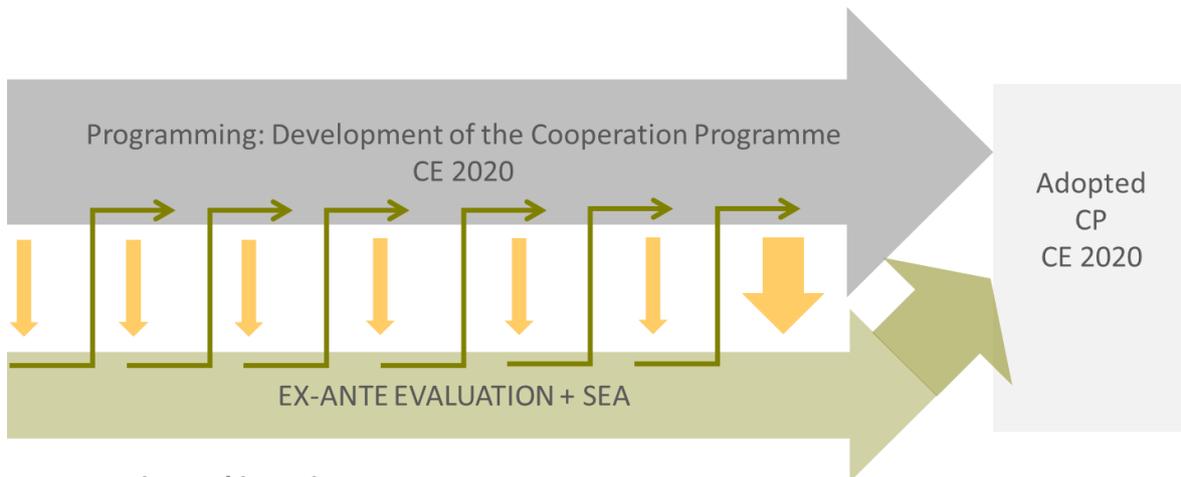
The implementation-oriented interviews were carried out with different stakeholders. These included the Managing Authority of the CE 2007-2013 Programme, the JTS of the CE 2007-2013 Programme as well as the on-going evaluator of the current CE 2007-2013 Programme. The objective of these interviews was to obtain additional expert input needed to evaluate the implementing provisions of the CE 2020 Programme. Lessons-learned from the CE 2007-2013 Programme were identified by addressing these experts who are directly involved in the implementation of the Programme.

Five interviews were conducted with a focus on external coherence and the integrated approach to territorial development. Experts from the EU funding programmes HORIZON 2020, LIFE+, COSME, TEN-T as well as a EC DG Regio expert on macro-regional strategies (MRS) were interviewed. The objective of these interviews was not only to identify possible synergies and interlinkages between the CE 2020 Programme and other funding programmes and initiatives, but also to discuss ways to improve the coordination between existing instruments.

²¹ For priority axis 3, two thematic experts of Member states were interviewed - except for Italy and Hungary.

4. Process of the ex-ante evaluation

The ex-ante evaluation started in January 2013 and was finalised at the beginning of April 2014. It was conducted in parallel to the programming process of the Cooperation Programme CE 2020. Both evaluation and programming processes were closely coordinated and followed a highly interactive and iterative approach.



Interactive and iterative process

“recommendations [of the ex-ante evaluator] should be clear, based on evidence and adapted to the particular needs of the programme” (EC Guidance)

Figure 4: Ex-ante evaluation as iterative process

Source: blue! | DSN 2014

In order to guarantee an efficient and transparent evaluation process, the ex-ante evaluator was in constant dialogue with the relevant programme bodies, namely MA/JTS and the Steering Group for the CE 2020 Programme. Following tools were used in order to foster this close dialogue:

- Regular meetings
- Regular phone conferences
- Regular email updates and information exchange
- Participation of the ex-ante evaluator in most of the meetings of the Steering Group which took place during the duration of the evaluation, one national stakeholder workshop in Berlin/Germany as well as the transnational stakeholder consultation workshop of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme in Padua/Italy.

Ex-ante recommendations and feedback on the CP drafts were provided by means of the reporting system, which consisted of:

- Consultations of the programme bodies
- Various feedback notes
- Presentations at the meetings of the CE 2014+ Steering Group
- Evaluation reports (three intermediate reports and this final report)

The following figure provides an overview on the contributions of the ex-ante evaluation during the course of programme development:

| Programme development steps | Contributions of the ex-ante evaluation |
|--|--|
| March 2013: CP version 0.0 (previously called 1.0) New: Regional analysis and programme strategy | ⇒ Feedback note, contributions at 4th SG meeting (21-22 March 2013, Vienna/Austria) |
| May 2013: CP version 1.0 (ETC model introduced) Revised regional analysis and programme strategy | ⇒ Intermediate evaluation report 1 (June 2013) |
| June 2013: CP version 2.1.1 Revised regional analysis and programme strategy New: Priority axes – without indicators | ⇒ Feedback note, contributions at 5th SG meeting (4-5 July 2013, Vienna/Austria) |
| July 2013: CP version 2.1.2 Revised priority axes – without indicators | ⇒ Intermediate evaluation report 2 (Sept 2013) |
| September 2013: CP version 3.1 (intervention logic of 2.1.2) New: Priority axis 5, Implementing provisions Discussion paper 3.2 (revised intervention logic) | ⇒ Feedback note, contributions at 6th SG meeting (19-20 Sept 2013, Vienna/Austria) |
| November 2013: CP version 3.2. Revised intervention logic New: Indicators, horizontal principles, implementing provisions | ⇒ Intermediate evaluation report 3 (Nov. 2013), contributions at 7th SG meeting (28-29 Nov 2013, Ljubljana/Slovenia) ⇒ Feedback note on indicator methodology |
| December 2013: CP version 4.0 | ⇒ Draft Final Evaluation Report (Jan 2014) |
| February 2014: CP version 4.0. | ⇒ Contribution at 8th SG meeting (04. – 05 February 2014 Vienna/Austria) |
| April 2014: Draft final CP | ⇒ Pre-final Evaluation Report (April 2014) |
| July – November 2014 EC negotiation → Final CP | ⇒ Final Evaluation Report (November 2014) |

Figure 5: Overview of ex-ante evaluation process and deliverables of the evaluator

Source: blue! | DSN 2014

Formal evaluation principles

Being an integral part of the culture of collaboration between the ex-ante evaluator and the programme bodies, the following formal evaluation principles were pursued in the evaluation and reporting process:

- transparent work plan as steering instrument for the evaluation process
- integrated research approach
- clearly structured reports
- action-oriented concepts
- illustration of complex issues with graphics
- simplified wording
- priority setting / rankings (importance and relevance of results and recommendations)
- lining out implications of the results for the design of the new programme

The feedback given by the evaluators was differentiated into two categories: The first category of feedback was given in a process-oriented, iterative way in order to make supporting remarks, propose alternatives or add thematic reflections. This sort of written feedback in the reports was in the form of “suggestions”. The more formal feedback requesting amendments or changes of the CP in order to comply with the ex-ante assessment criteria was placed in the report under “recommendations”. The amendments subsequent to a “recommendation” were tracked in the “recommendation-tracker” which can be found in the Annex B.

Component 1: Programme strategy

5. Consistency

The assessment of the consistency of the programme strategy by the ex-ante evaluator finds its legal basis in CPR Article 55, which states that the ex-ante evaluation shall appraise “the contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, having regard to the selected thematic objectives and priorities, taking into account national and regional needs and potential for development as well as lessons drawn from previous programming periods”. Furthermore, “the consistency of the selected thematic objectives, the priorities and corresponding objectives of the programmes with the CSF, the Partnership Agreement and the relevant country specific recommendations” should be evaluated.

Hence, the appraisal of the consistency of the programme strategy is a two-fold exercise: On the one hand, the compliance of the programme strategy with the reference framework – set by the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) and the relevant regulations – was evaluated. On the other hand, the consistency of the programme strategy was assessed with regards to the identified challenges and needs of the programme area and their consistent consideration in the different elements of the programme strategy.

The following analysis of the consistency of the programme strategy is based on the recommendations given by the evaluator during earlier stages of the CP preparation process and refers to Section 1 and 2A of the final CP (based on ETC CP model).

Consistency of objectives with the Europe 2020 Strategy and the CSF

The assessment of the consistency of the programme objectives with the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) comprises the following evaluation questions:

EQ 1: Are the chosen programme objectives in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy?

EQ 2: Do the proposed thematic objectives, priorities and corresponding objectives comply with the CSF?

The Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth with its goals for employment, innovation, education, poverty reduction and climate/energy sets the strategic framework for all EU Cohesion Policy programmes²². Against this backdrop, and as stipulated by the legislative framework for European cooperation programmes, the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme 2014-2020 has defined its objectives.

Four thematic objectives (TO) were selected and translated into the following four priority axes:

- “Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive” (TO 1 – Strengthening research, technological development and innovation)

²² cf. COM (2012): Elements for a Common Strategic Framework 2014 to 2020. Commission Staff Working Document

- “Cooperating on low-carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE” (TO 4 – Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors)
- “Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE” (TO 6 – Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency)
- “Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE” (TO 7 – Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures)

| No. | Europe 2020 | Thematic Objective | Formulation for CP CE2020 |
|------|--------------------|---|---|
| TO1 | Smart growth | Strengthening research, technological development and innovation | Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive |
| TO2 | | Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies | |
| TO3 | | Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and the fisheries and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF). | |
| TO4 | Sustainable growth | Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors | Cooperating on low-carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE |
| TO5 | | Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management | |
| TO6 | | Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency | Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE |
| TO7 | | Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures | Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE |
| TO8 | Inclusive growth | Promoting employment and supporting labour mobility | |
| TO9 | | Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty | |
| TO10 | | Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning | |
| TO11 | | Enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration | |

Figure 6: Europe 2020 Strategy, thematic objectives and corresponding formulations chosen for the CE2020 programme

Source: blue! | DSN 2014

The programme architecture, targeting the fields of innovation, low-carbon economy, natural and cultural resources as well as transport, is in line with the post-Lisbon goals and keeps – at level of the thematic objectives – the main emphasis on addressing smart and sustainable growth. With this, it follows the “traditional” orientation of transnational cooperation (TNC) programmes. Objectives towards inclusive growth, e.g. in the fields of employment, education, social cohesion, are not addressed at the level of the thematic objectives, but it is recognised that TNC programmes substantially contribute to them²³.

According to the defined programme strategy and as already well highlighted in the final CP, the CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020 Programme contributes to the seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy:

- Priority axis 1 (addressing TO 1) “Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive” closely relates to the flagship initiatives for smart growth, pushes forward the flagship initiative “Innovation Union” and is also linked to “An industrial policy for the globalisation era” as well as to the “Agenda for new skills and jobs”.
- Priority axis 2 (addressing TO 4) “Cooperating on low-carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE” primarily addresses the initiatives for sustainable growth, contributing primarily to the flagship initiative “Resource-efficient Europe” and “Agenda for new skills and jobs”.
- Priority axis 3 (addressing TO 6) “Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE” relates mainly to the flagship initiative “Resource-efficient Europe”. Further reference is provided to the “Agenda for new skills and jobs”.
- Priority axis 4 (addressing TO 7) “Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE” contributes more indirectly to the flagship initiative for smart growth as well as to the initiative “Resource-efficient Europe”.

The Common Strategic Framework²⁴ is the guiding document of the legislative framework for cohesion policy and translates the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth into the key actions of the five CSF funds²⁵. Thus, the CSF provides guidance in the process of setting up post-2013 Cohesion Policy Programmes – including the CE 2020 Programme. In addition, this framework serves as a basis for drafting the Partnership Agreements between the national authorities and the European Commission, with the national authorities committing themselves to meeting Europe's growth and jobs targets for 2020. Following the Common Provision Regulation as well as the regulations for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) regulation, the CSF provides a standardised framework for the strategic direction of the CE 2020 Programme.

²³ cf. CENTRAL EUROPE (2011): Report Contribution of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme to the transnational cooperation 2020, p. 46ff.

²⁴ COM (2013): Annex I of the CPR regulation

²⁵ The CSF funds are the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

Based on an exhaustive analysis of the territorial challenges and needs of the programme area, the CE 2020 Programme has set up its programme objective tree as displayed in Annex 06 of the CP. With the selection of four (out of the pre-set menu of eleven) thematic objectives and seven investment priorities (IP), the CE 2020 Programme strategy fully complies with the provisions of the CSF²⁶.

It can be stated that the thematic objectives selected for CE 2020 correspond well to the focus areas for transnational cooperation programmes as laid down in the CSF (Annex II)²⁷. The references to the CSF e.g. regarding cooperation in R&D and innovation, joint management of natural resources are well described in the final CP. Some areas listed in the CSF are less directly addressed than others (such as governance/security and ICT), which is plausible, considering that a thematic choice had to be taken and the relevance of topics for transnational cooperation programmes had to be ensured (also in demarcation to cross-order programmes). Furthermore, the requirement for thematic concentration of the CSF funds leads to a thematic programme design that can naturally not address all focus areas in the same way and intensity.

Regarding the derivation of the programme strategy, the CSF calls for a need-driven and performance-oriented approach. The CENTRAL EUROPE Programme has undertaken a very comprehensive territorial analysis in order to define the relevant territorial challenges and policy needs of the CE 2020 programme area²⁸. In the final CP, a thorough and sound socio-economic analysis is presented, which serves as an anchor point for strategy development. The territorial challenges and needs of the programme area are clearly identified and backed by evidence from the comprehensive document analysis as well as an intensive stakeholder involvement process. The CE 2020 strategy has taken into account all necessary requirements that provide ground and justification for the strategy²⁹.

During the evaluation process the ex-ante evaluator developed various suggestions for improvement as well as a set of formal recommendations targeting at an improved consistency of the programme objectives with the Europe 2020 Strategy and the CSF. The CP in its different draft versions has well progressed and all interim recommendations have satisfactorily been integrated. Detailed information on the uptake of the evaluator's recommendations during the process can be found in Annex B (recommendation tracker).

All in all, it can be stated, that the final CP of the CE 2020 Programme is fully consistent with the Europe 2020 Strategy and the CSF:

- The strategy of the CE 2020 Programme, as presented in the final CP of the Cooperation Programme, clearly addresses the new growth targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

²⁶ The choice of thematic objectives for transnational cooperation programmes is limited to maximum four out of eleven defined in the CPR Regulation and Article 5 of the ETC regulation.

²⁷ cf. COM (2012): Elements for a Common Strategic Framework 2014 to 2020. Commission Staff Working Document

²⁸ cf.: CE (2012): Results of the regional analysis Document analysis, online survey, interviews, SWOT, 4 September 2012.

²⁹ In context of the Partnership Agreements the CSF highlights the "need to programme the CSF Funds taking into account the most recent relevant country-specific recommendations issued by the Council on the basis of Articles 121(2) and 148(4) TFEU and reflecting their National Reform Programmes" (CSF p. 6)

- The programme strategy fully complies with the CSF; the principle of thematic focussing as laid out in the ETC regulation, Art. 5³⁰, has been safeguarded.
- In line with Article 8 (2 (a)) of the ETC regulation, the programme strategy and the programme's contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as well as to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion are well described.

Consistency of objectives with challenges and needs

The assessment of the consistency of the programme objectives with the challenges and needs of the programme area comprises following evaluation questions:

EQ 3: Are the challenges and needs as in the CP justified?

EQ 4: Is the choice of thematic priorities and investment priorities justified?

EQ 5: Do the objectives precisely demonstrate how the programme contributes to the challenges and needs in the programme area?

EQ 6: Is a justification given for non-inclusion of major challenges and needs?

EQ 7: Have the key territorial challenges for urban, rural, coastal and fisheries areas as well as for areas with particular territorial features been analysed and taken into account in the strategy?

Baseline for strategy development

Since 2011, the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme has undertaken a comprehensive process of analyses and stakeholder involvement for providing an evidence-based development of the CE 2020 Programme strategy.

The final CP of the Cooperation Programme of the CE 2020 Programme contains a thorough if compact socio-economic analysis of the programme area³¹. The analysis and identification of the challenges and needs both are guided along the following eight different thematic fields:

1. Globalisation and economic development
2. Social cohesion
3. Demographic change
4. Climate change
5. Energy
6. Natural and cultural resources
7. Accessibility, transport and communication infrastructure
8. Governance structures

³⁰ cf. COM (2013): REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal

³¹ The compact style of the regional analysis is also due to the limitation of characters of the ETC CP model.

The choice of these analytic categories³² is backed up by related analyses of the challenges and needs of EU regions against the background of the Europe 2020 Strategy and is regarded as adequate in order to create the baseline for programme strategy development.

The territorial challenges of the central Europe programme area in the different fields are well elaborated in a profound in-depth analysis, derived from the preceding territorial analysis of the programme and referring to a thorough analysis of more than 200 policy documents at regional, national level of the MS as well as at EU level³³ (e.g. programming documents, policy papers, etc.). Furthermore, the country-specific recommendations have been taken into account.

Based on the regional analysis, the final CP contains a compact SWOT analysis, which integrates the analysis of the situation of the programme area and the analysis of strategic documents on European, transnational, national and regional level. A more detailed SWOT overview per thematic objective can be found in Annex 05 of the CP.

Thematic concentration

Derived from this analytical background the programme strategy of the CE 2020 Programme presents the following choices that are in compliance with the legislative framework:

| THEMATIC OBJECTIVE (TO) | INVESTMENT PRIORITY (IP) | SELECTION CE 2020 |
|---|---|-------------------|
| 1. strengthening research, technological development and innovation | 1a) enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest | no |
| | 1b) promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies | yes |
| 2. enhancing access to and use and quality of ICT | 2a) extending broadband deployment and the roll-out of high-speed networks and supporting the adoption of emerging technologies and networks for the digital economy | no |

³² Eight main topics classified on the basis of: Commission of the European Communities, 2008; European Commission, 2006b; ESPON, 2006)

³³ cf. CENTRAL EUROPE PROGRAMME (2012): Results of the regional analysis Document analysis, online survey, interviews, SWOT, 4 September 2012, p.22

| THEMATIC OBJECTIVE (TO) | INVESTMENT PRIORITY (IP) | SELECTION CE 2020 |
|---|---|-------------------|
| | 2b) developing ICT products and services, e-commerce and enhancing demand for ICT | no |
| | 2c) strengthening ICT applications for e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health | no |
| 3. enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, of the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and of fishery and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF) | 3a) promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators | no |
| | 3b) developing and implementing new business models for SMEs, in particular for internationalisation | no |
| | 3c) supporting the creation and the extension of advanced capacities for product and service development | no |
| | 3d) supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes | no |
| 4. supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors | 4a) promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources | no |
| | 4b) promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in enterprises | no |
| | 4c) supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructure, including in public buildings, and in the housing sector | yes |
| | 4d) developing and implementing smart distribution systems that operate at low and medium voltage levels | no |
| | 4e) promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multimodal urban mobility and mitigation-relevant adaptation measures | yes |
| | 4f) promoting research and innovation in, and adoption of, low-carbon technologies | no |
| | 4g) promoting the use of high-efficiency co-generation of heat and power based on useful heat demand | no |
| 5. promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management | 5a) supporting investment for adaptation to climate change, including ecosystem-based approaches | no |
| | 5b) promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems | no |
| 6. preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency | 6a) investing in the waste sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements | no |

| THEMATIC OBJECTIVE (TO) | INVESTMENT PRIORITY (IP) | SELECTION CE 2020 |
|--|--|-------------------|
| | 6b) investing in the water sector to meet the requirements to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements | no |
| | 6c) conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage | yes |
| | 6d) protecting and restoring biodiversity, and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through NATURA 2000, and green infrastructure | no |
| | 6e) taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate of brownfield sites (including conversion area), reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures | yes |
| | 6f) promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil or to reduce air pollution | no |
| | 6g) supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors | no |
| 7. promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures | 7a) supporting a multimodal Single European Transport Area by investing in the TEN-T | no |
| | 7b) enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes | yes |
| | 7c) developing and improving environment-friendly (including low-noise) and low-carbon transport systems including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports and multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility | yes |
| | 7d) developing and rehabilitating comprehensive, high quality and interoperable railway system, and promoting noise-reduction measures | no |
| | 7e) improving energy efficiency and security of supply through the development of smart energy distribution, storage and transmission systems and through the integration of distributed generation from renewable sources developing smart gas and power distribution, storage and transmission systems | no |
| 8. promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility | 8a) supporting the development of business incubators and investment support for self-employment, micro-enterprises and business creation | no |

| THEMATIC OBJECTIVE (TO) | INVESTMENT PRIORITY (IP) | SELECTION CE 2020 |
|---|--|-------------------|
| | 8b) supporting employment-friendly growth through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial strategy for specific areas including the conversion of declining industrial regions and enhancement of accessibility to, and development of, specific natural and cultural resources | no |
| | 8c) supporting local development initiatives and aid for structures providing neighbourhood services to create new jobs, where such actions are outside the scope of Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council | no |
| | 8d) investing in infrastructure for public employment services | no |
| 9. promoting social inclusion, and combating poverty and any discrimination | 9a) investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and transition from institutional to community-based services | no |
| | 9b) providing for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas | no |
| | 9c) providing support for social enterprises | no |
| | 9d) undertaking investment in the context of community-led local development strategies | no |
| 10. investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning | 10a) investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning by developing education and training infrastructure | no |
| 11. enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration | 11a) enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration | no |

Figure 7: Programme strategy of CE 2020 and the selected investment priorities

Source: blue! | DSN 2014

Regarding these choices, the Cooperation Programme includes a justification for each of the four thematic objectives (including also the one or two investment priorities chosen). In

compliance with the CP model, a synthetic overview of the justification for the selection of the TOs and IPs is provided³⁴.

A thorough analysis of the identified challenges and needs and their linkages to the different TOs by the evaluator showed that the programme went for the optimal solution regarding the choices at the level of TOs and IPs. The analysis of the response of the thematic objectives to the identified challenges and needs shows a broad “coverage” of the major challenges and needs, which are addressed by the selected TO 1, 4, 6 and 7 or as horizontal issues.

Transnational cooperation programmes need to substantiate their strategic choices by considering the complementarity to other EU funds and interventions at regional and national level. This requirement has been respected by the selection of the TOs of the CE 2020 Programme. A range of identified challenges and needs are not covered directly by the chosen thematic objectives. For instance, unemployment is a major challenge for the programme area and has its thematically most relevant linkage to TO 8 “Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility”. Hence, the evaluator agrees to the non-selection of TOs 8, 9 and 10 following the reasoning of the CP with references to other funds such as the European Social Fund (ESF). Furthermore, the CP caters for the horizontal consideration of relevant issues like social inclusion, promotion of employment, climate change as well as demographic change.

Moreover, the following TOs were not taken up by the CE 2020 Programme:

TO 2: Enhancing access to and use and quality of information and communication technologies. Although relevant challenges and needs were identified, the relevance and suitability of this TO for a TNC programme is doubtful. The justification for exclusion given in the CP (Annex 04) is considered valid.

TO 3: Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, of the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and of fishery and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF). Although the relevance of promoting SMEs and addressing this objective by TNC – in response to challenges and needs in central Europe – is significantly high, the respective challenges and needs are efficiently addressed by TO 1 and as a horizontal issue. The evaluator validates the non-selection.

TO 5: Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management. The data analysis of the challenges and needs showed that there is a variety of major challenges and needs in central Europe concerned with TO 5, such as extreme events like droughts, heat waves, floods, storms, mass movements as well as the need for mitigation and adaptation measures at a supra-regional level. The non-selection of TO 5 can be considered as sufficiently justified as these major challenges and needs are successfully addressed by TO 4 and TO 6. Moreover, by its emphasis on low-carbon strategies, the CENTRAL EUROPE 2020 Programme will significantly contribute to objectives in the field of climate change, also strongly linked to actions for a low-carbon economy.

TO 11: Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration. Although strongly linked to major challenges and needs in central

³⁴ It is required to deliver a “Justification for the choice of thematic objectives and corresponding investment priorities, having regard to the Common Strategic Framework based on an analysis of the situation of the programme area as a whole in terms of needs and the strategy chosen in response [...]” ETC CP model

Europe, the non-selection is reasonable since it is only relevant for programmes directly linked to a specific EU macro-regional strategy (MRS).

Regarding the selection of IPs within the selected TOs, the appraisal of the evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- TO 1: The selection of IP 1b is plausible, since IP 1a primarily targets R&D structure and the spectrum of 1b corresponds to the topics for TNC. Sufficient justification is provided with reference to respective major challenges and needs as well as to the continuation of successful programme implementation targeting the facilitation of innovation through TNC.
- TO 4: Considering the long catalogue of challenges and needs in central Europe that call for low-carbon strategies, the choice of IP 4c seems inevitable. Similarly, the choice of IP 4e is comprehensible. Sufficient justification is provided with reference to major challenges and needs as well as to the potential for capitalising on previous programme results from the CE 2007-2013 Programme.
- TO 6: This TO addresses a long list of challenges and needs in central Europe. The selection of IP 6c is mainly justified by the strategic requirement to address both natural and cultural resources as a major potential for sustainable growth in central Europe. Furthermore, IP 6e complements the integrated approach regarding natural resources and environmental protection. Justification is provided with reference to major challenges and needs as well as to the potential to successfully carry on with operations addressing respective topics efficiently.
- TO 7: The selection made by the CE 2020 Programme corresponds to key challenges and needs in central Europe. The selection of IP 7b and 7c is well justified since these IPs are most suitable for TNC programmes. Sufficient justification is provided with reference to major challenges and needs as well as the need for continuation of successful cooperation in the CE 2007-2013 Programme in the field of accessibility and multi-modal logistics.

Programme objectives and priorities

With the **overall goal** defined as “cooperating beyond borders in central Europe to make our cities and regions better places to live and work”, the CE 2020 Programme presents its objectives under an umbrella that provides efficient communication to all different stakeholders and beneficiaries. This goal is substantiated by a more technical formulation: “Transnational cooperation in central Europe is the catalyst for implementing smart solutions answering to regional challenges in the fields of innovation, low carbon economy, environment, culture and transport. It builds regional capacities following an integrated bottom-up approach involving and coordinating relevant actors from all governance levels”. Compared to the preceding CE 2007-2013 Programme and its overall goal of “strengthening territorial cohesion, promoting internal integration and enhancing the competitiveness of Central Europe”, a significant shift is notable: The overall approach as well as the thematic spectrum of the programme are described far more detailed, considering the required thematic concentration as well as the specific “niche” of interventions of a TNC programme.

The **priority axes** are formulated in correspondence to the TO, defining the areas in which cooperation will be targeted by the programme more precisely. Thereby, the titles of

the priority axes provide a clear picture on what the programme intends to address (“Cooperating on...”).

During the evaluation process, the ex-ante evaluator developed various suggestions as well as a set of formal recommendations targeting an improved consistency of the programme objectives with the challenges and needs of the programme area. The CP in its different draft versions has well progressed and all interim recommendations have satisfactorily been integrated. Detailed information on the uptake of the evaluator’s recommendations during the process can be found in Annex B (recommendation tracker).

Regarding the final CP, the appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- The territorial challenges and needs of the CE 2020 Programme area are sufficiently elaborated by a profound analysis. The country-specific recommendations have been sufficiently taken into account.
- The choice of the analytic categories is backed by related analysis approaches of the challenges and needs of EU regions (against the background of Europe 2020) and is regarded as adequate in order to create the baseline for strategy development.
- Comprehensive tracking/cross-reference analyses undertaken by the ex-ante evaluator revealed that the identified challenges and needs and their linkages to the different TOs reflect the “optimal solution” regarding the choices at the level of the thematic objectives for the CE 2020 Programme. The selected TOs are in line with issues identified as being most suitable to be tackled by transnational cooperation.
- The selection of TOs and IPs (1b, 4c, 4e, 6c, 6e, 7b and 7c) as such is traceable and can be acknowledged as justified.
- The analysis of the response of the thematic objectives to the identified challenges and needs shows a broad “coverage” of the major challenges and needs, which are addressed by the selected TO 1, 4, 6 and 7 or as horizontal issues. The consideration of the horizontal issues “demographic change, climate change and social inclusion” is well emphasised and anchored in the programme strategy (responding to identified challenges and needs of the programme area).
- The programme strategy responds to the major challenges and needs of the programme area which can successfully be tackled by transnational cooperation.
- Where relevant, key territorial challenges for urban, rural, coastal and fisheries areas as well as for areas with particular territorial features, have been analysed and taken into account by the strategy.

6. Coherence

The assessment of the coherence of the programme strategy by the ex-ante evaluator is based on CPR Article 55 (b) which states that the ex-ante evaluation shall appraise “the internal coherence of the proposed programme [...] and its relationship with other relevant instruments”.

Thus, the evaluation steps on the coherence of the programme encompass, on the one hand, the assessment of the internal coherence of the programme strategy by analysing the relationships of the different elements of the programme strategy. On the other hand, the relationship with other funding instruments is assessed based on the information provided in the CP. The following analysis of the coherence of the programme strategy is based on recommendations given by the evaluator during earlier stages of the CP preparation process, and refers to Section 2A (internal coherence), 4 and 6 (external coherence) of the final CP (based on ETC CP model).

Internal coherence

The assessment of the internal coherence comprises following evaluation questions:

EQ 8: Are the selected thematic objectives and investment priorities covered by corresponding specific objectives and do all specific objectives contribute to the programme strategy?

EQ 9: Do the specific objectives of the single priority axes show a thematic compliance or can antagonistic effects be identified?

EQ 10: Do the specific objectives of different priority axes show a thematic compliance or can antagonistic effects be identified?

The CE 2020 Programme translates the selected IPs into the following specific objectives:

- 1.1: To improve sustainable linkages among actors of the central European innovation systems for strengthening regional innovation capacity in central Europe
- 1.2: To improve skills and entrepreneurial competences for advancing economic and social innovation in central European regions
- 2.1: To develop and implement solutions for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy usage in public infrastructures
- 2.2: To improve territorially based low carbon energy planning strategies and policies supporting climate change mitigation
- 2.3: To improve capacities for mobility planning in functional urban areas to lower CO₂ emissions
- 3.1: To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources
- 3.2: To improve capacities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources
- 3.3: To improve environmental management of functional urban areas to make them more liveable places
- 4.1: To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks

4.2: To improve coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environment-friendly freight solutions

The deduction of specific objectives from the thematic objectives and investments priorities of the CSF were analysed together with “the relationship between the specific objectives (SO) of each priority axis, and between the specific objectives of the different priority axes [...]”. The evaluator should also “verify that complementarities and potential synergies are identified” (COM Ex-ante guidance).

| Specific objective | Completeness check | Thematic compliance between specific objectives, complementarities and synergies | Potential antagonistic effects |
|---|---|---|--------------------------------|
| 1.1 To improve sustainable linkages among actors of the central European innovation systems for strengthening regional innovation capacity in central Europe | ✓ The CP takes up the focus on links and synergies of IP 1b and adds the dimension of skills and competence development and enhancement. | ✓ Particularly to SO 1.2, but also to all other SOs. | none |
| 1.2 To improve skills and entrepreneurial competences for advancing economic and social innovation in central European regions | | ✓ Particularly to SO 1.1, but also to all other SOs. | none |
| 2.1 To develop and implement solutions for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy usage in public infrastructures | ✓ The three chosen SOs relate directly to IPs 4c and 4e. | ✓ Particularly to SO 2.2, but also to SO 3.3 | none |
| 2.2 To improve territorially based low carbon energy planning strategies and policies supporting climate change mitigation | SO 2.1 is directly deduced from IP 4c. SO 2.2 and SO 2.3 together cover IP 4e, with SO 2.3 focusing in particular on urban mobility. | ✓ Particularly to SO 2.3, but also to SO 3.1 and 3.3 | none |
| 2.3 To improve capacities for mobility planning in functional urban areas to lower CO2 emissions | | ✓ Particularly to SO 2.2, but also to SO 4.1 as well as 3.3 with focus on urban functional area. | none |

| Specific objective | Completeness check | Thematic compliance between specific objectives, complementarities and synergies | Potential antagonistic effects |
|--|--|--|---|
| 3.1 To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources | ✓ The defined SOs relate directly to IPs 6c and 6e. | ✓ Particularly to SOs 3.2 and 3.3, but also to SO 2.2 | none |
| 3.2 To improve capacities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources | IP 6c is divided up into two SOs, one related to natural and the other related to cultural heritage. IP 6e correlates to SO 3.3, with a focus on environmental management. | ✓ Particularly to SO 3.1. | none |
| 3.3 To improve environmental management of functional urban areas to make them more liveable places | | ✓ Particularly to SO 3.1, but also to SOs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.1 and 4.2 | none |
| 4.1 To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks | | ✓ The defined SOs directly relate to IP 7b and 7c. | ✓ Particularly to SO 4.2, but also to SO 2.3 and 3.3 |
| 4.2 To improve coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environment-friendly freight solutions | Environment-friendly approaches to passenger transport are not covered by priority axis 4, but can be found in SO 2.3. | ✓ Particularly to SO 4.1 | none |

During the evaluation process the ex-ante evaluator developed various suggestions as well as a set of formal recommendations targeting at an improved internal coherence of the programme objectives. The CP in its different draft versions has well progressed and all interim recommendations have satisfactorily been integrated. Detailed information on the uptake of the evaluator's recommendations during the process can be found in Annex B (recommendation tracker).

Regarding the final CP, the appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- The CP model has been filled in formally correct in line with the regulations.
- The deduction of programme specific objectives from the thematic objectives and investments priorities of the CSF are straightforward and coherent in all priority axes. The selected IPs are successfully translated into specific objectives with appropriate references to the territorial types addressed.
- Potential antagonistic effects of the specific objectives of the CE 2020 Programme strategy were not identified, but rather far-reaching thematic compliance and several potential synergies within single priority axes and also between them.

External coherence - Relation with other instruments

The assessment of the external coherence comprises the following evaluation questions:

EQ 11: Are there potential overlaps or synergies with other funding instruments?

EQ 12: Does the programme support integrated territorial approaches appropriate to achieve the thematic priorities?

EQ 13: Are regional, local and urban development initiatives seen as an endorsing part of the programmes activities?

EQ 14: Does the programme create synergies with other activities which would not have occurred without EU assistance?

Section 6 of the final CP describes synergies as well as envisaged coordination mechanisms with a range of other EU instruments. The evaluation includes both the expert view of the ex-ante evaluator on the structural and thematic level of the funding instruments and on practical aspects, as well as selected interviews with Commission experts representing different funding instruments.

Other ESI funds: It is hardly surprising that thematic overlaps with other ETC programmes are quite substantial (although not covering the same programme area in its entirety), but there are also strong links to funds like ERDF (at regional level), ESF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD and EMFF. The CP highlights and explores these links to the CE 2020 Programme, both at operation / national level and its potential as preparatory ground for medium- to large-scale investments. At operation level, it is recommended to keep this at a pragmatic level to avoid an overcomplex application process. At national level, the CP includes proposals for joint communication and coordination activities with the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal. These commitments are likely to contribute to and improve coordination with the ESI funds. With respect to other ETC programmes, the commitment to joint information sessions, activities for information exchange as well as the active use of the flexibility rules allows for a sound and coordinated implementation of programmes

with an overlapping geographical scope and improved orientation for potential applicants. The programme can also benefit from joint approaches in strategic programme implementation (e.g. analyses, demarcation of targeted calls, etc.), especially during the second half of the programme cycle.

Other Union Instruments such as Horizon 2020, COSME, LIFE+, TEN-T: Synergies with these instruments mainly concern the transfer of original research into policy implementation, pilot investments and finally to a large scale innovation roll-out. Different funding opportunities are of use at different development stages. The evaluator suggests to actively encourage beneficiaries and programming bodies to improve their strategic orientation within the comprehensive funding landscape at regional, national and EU level to be prepared for a mixed use of instruments. Moreover, also the structural setting of programmes helps to exploit coordination potentials. The CP intends to coordinate activities with these programmes through three types of activities. With respect to the first two, the role of ETC operations in preparing and increasing the capacity of regional innovation systems is highlighted. CE 2020 operations can both serve as upstream (operations as “seedbeds”) and downstream links (implement results). The conclusions of the CP in terms of the LIFE+ and TEN-T programmes and possible coordination efforts are plausible and backed up by expert interviews.

ENI and IPA: The described coordination mechanisms between CE 2020 and IPA/ENI are likely to create synergies. However, due to the differences in funding approaches, overall goal and target groups, these are not as significant as with other EU instruments. The commitment of the CE 2020 Programme to improve exchange on operation level with ENI CBC programmes is likely to be very beneficial for the programme implementation. It is highly suggested to also reflect the coordination mechanisms with regards to the flexibility rules with the inclusion of non-EU Member States.

Relevant national funding instruments: The described coordination mechanisms both at operation and programme level are likely to create synergies. Still, it should be highlighted that the requirement for applicants to relate to all relevant national funding options should be limited, as this puts a significant burden on the application process.

The EIB: The described coordination mechanisms are likely to create synergies. It is relevant to highlight that ETC programmes may not directly serve as “preparatory” actions for large-scale, bankable operations. However, ETC operations could be one of the preparatory steps leading to infrastructure investments financed by EIB.

Section 4 of the CP presents an integrated programme approach that combines thematic and sectoral aspects with a territorial dimension. This is accomplished by linking the programme strategy directly to those identified needs and challenges of the programme area which can be tackled by transnational cooperation. Section 4 provides an overview on how the different programme priority axes approach the territorial dimension of the programme’s challenges and needs. For each priority axis, the identified territorial challenges and needs are presented. The CE 2020 Programme follows and supports an integrated territorial approach in its intervention logic that is in line with identified territorial challenges and needs. Relevant territorial aspects of the SWOT analysis have been taken up and have subsequently been integrated into objectives, actions and results. Besides the integrated territorial approach of the CE 2020 Programme within its own remit, another relevant question relates to how the programme strategy supports other existing

integrated territorial approaches that territorially overlap with the CE 2020 Programme. Of particular interest at transnational level are the macro-regional strategies (MRS). Relevant strategies for the CE 2020 Programme are the Baltic Sea Strategy and Danube Strategy, the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy currently under development and the future Alpine Strategy.

Section 4 of the CP also presents a short description of the potential contributions of the CE 2020 Programme to these four macro-regional strategies. As the objectives of the existing MRS have been taken into account during programming, a strategic contribution to the MRS is made possible. The results show that thematic synergies with the MRS Baltic Sea, Danube and Adriatic-Ionian and potentially the future Alpine Strategy are high, albeit varying depending on the strategy.

During the evaluation process the ex-ante evaluator developed a set of recommendations for a strengthened integrated territorial approach of the CE 2020. The CP in its different draft versions has well progressed and all interim recommendations have satisfactorily been integrated. Detailed information on the uptake of the evaluator's recommendations during the process can be found in Annex B (recommendation tracker).

With respect to the question of synergy effects between the CE 2020 Programme and other activities that would not have occurred without EU assistance, ideally ETC operations would show leverage effects of maximum impact in their respective regions beyond operation termination. Here, CE 2020 operations potentially allow for leverage effects on various levels. As an example, a regional innovation strategy may be lacking drive in getting implemented and may be able to receive the necessary "kick-start" through the political and administrative commitment of a CE 2020 operation. Moreover, operations can lay the ground for larger investments. Other potential leverage effects can be obtained in relation to regional strategies, such as the "regional innovation strategies – RIS" prepared by Member States to comply with the requirements of the EU-MS partnership agreements. These strategies identify how acquired EU funds interlink with regional strategic frameworks that help to absorb funding in a more coordinated way.

The added value of transnational cooperation and its possible leverage effects are an important criterion for operation quality, for example when measures include a pilot test or feasibility study, while results are fully implemented under the regional programmes or when transnational operations build on research operations funded by HORIZON 2020.

Regarding the final CP, the appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- The coordination mechanisms with other instruments mentioned in the CP take into account the provisions laid down in the CSF as set out in Annex I of the CPR. The scope of the instruments dealt with in the Cooperation Programme is considered sufficient. The coordination mechanisms focus on different levels and are likely to be successfully achievable.
- With Section 4 and the information provided in Section 2 on the "Specific territories targeted" (for each priority axis) the CP fully meets the requirements of presenting a mature integrated approach to territorial development in central Europe.
- The CE 2020 Programme has a vast potential to create leverage effects and synergies with activities which would not have occurred without EU assistance.

7. Linkages between supported actions, expected outputs and results (intervention logic)

As laid down in the CPR Article 55 (f) and (h) should assess the intervention logic of the programme and of each priority axis. “It is good practice to use a logical framework to clarify the intervention logic under each investment priority or priority axis. Such a stylised representation demonstrates the causal links between the different actions, the planned outputs and the intended results” (COM Ex-ante guidance, p. 7).

According to the guidance of the European Commission provided on the evaluation and monitoring for Cohesion policy³⁵ and the framework set for the new structural funds programmes, the structure of the new generation of programmes should follow an intervention logic with clear causal links between the objectives, results, outputs, and actions of the programme.

Based on the guidance, the ex-ante evaluator developed a systematised methodology for the appraisal of the intervention logic of the CE 2020 Programme along the following scheme:

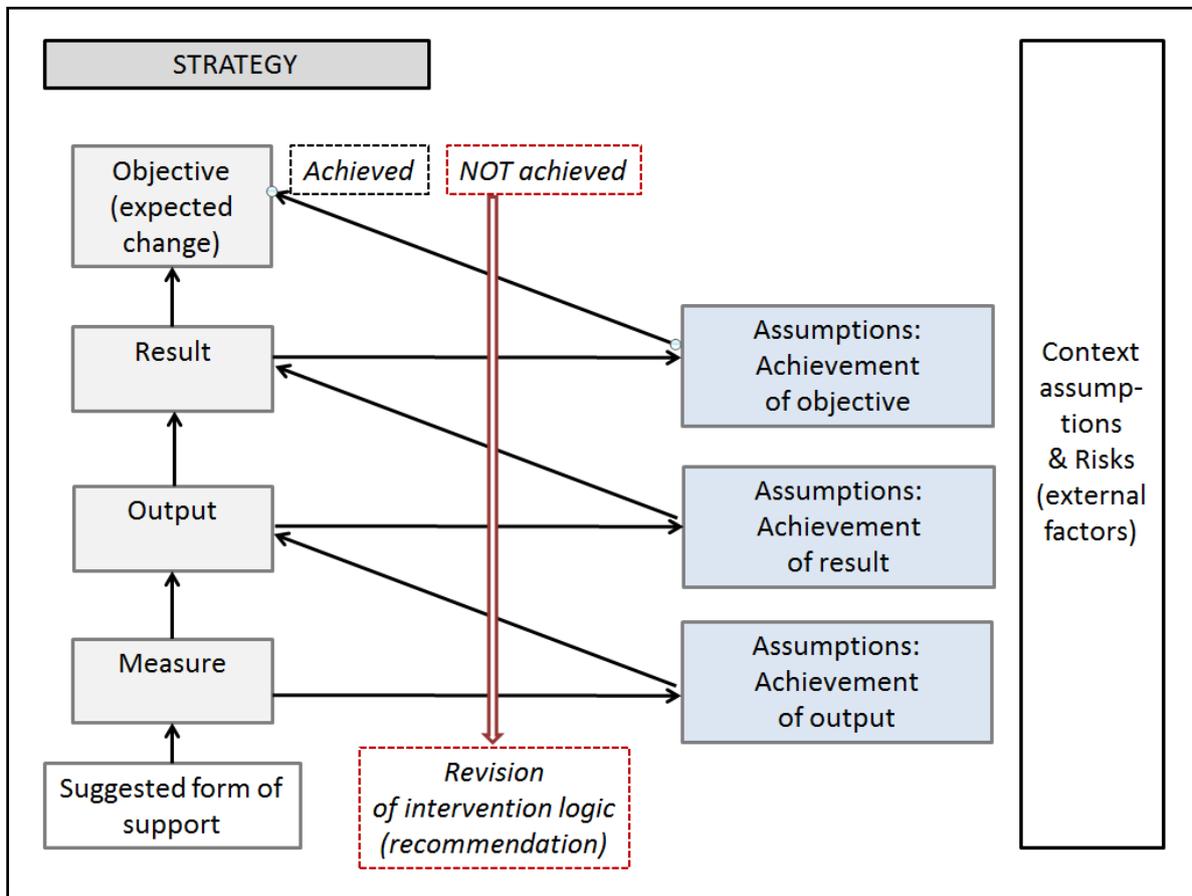


Figure 8: Appraisal of the intervention logic by the ex-ante evaluator

Source: blue! | DSN 2014

³⁵ cf. COM (2013): MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY – Guidance document on ex-ante evaluation

The evaluator has applied a systematised assessment of following elements of the intervention logic:

- Linkages between specific objectives and results
- Appraisal of the results
- Linkages between the results and outputs
- Appraisal of the (types of) outputs
- Linkages between the outputs and actions
- Appraisal of the actions (including examples)
- Consideration of external factors

The following appraisal of the intervention logic is based on the recommendations given by the evaluator during earlier stages of the CP preparation process and refers to Section 2A of the final CP (based on ETC CP model).

Linkage between supported actions, expected outputs and results

The assessment of the programme's intervention logic comprises the following evaluation questions:

- EQ 15: Can clear causal links between different actions, planned outputs and the intended results be established?*
- EQ 16: Have external factors which may influence the results have been taken into account?*
- EQ 17: Is the change that the programme intends to bring achievable through the operations delivering the outputs?*
- EQ 18: Is the rationale for the form of support proposed assessed as reasonable?*
- EQ 19: Do the outputs contribute to expected results?*
- EQ 20: Is the proposed support relevant in a transnational cooperation context?*
- EQ 21: Are the assumptions backed by evidence (previous experience, evaluations or studies)?*
- EQ 22: Are the actions proposed likely to contribute to the envisaged outputs and results?*

The intervention logic of CE 2020 is the outcome of a complex stakeholder involvement process, comprising different stages and methods during the development of the CP (online survey, national and transnational stakeholder events, expert involvement etc.) and it can be acknowledged that the process represents a very broad involvement of stakeholders with a broad territorial and sectoral coverage.

In accordance with the respective regulations and the ETC CP model, the CE 2020 Programme defines all necessary elements of the programme's intervention logic. In Section 2A of the final Cooperation Programme of CE 2020 the following elements are presented:

- Priority axes, with two - three specific objectives (SO)
- Specific objectives, one - two per IP
- Description of results and main result envisaged for each SO
- Description and examples of actions for each SO
- Description of types of outputs valid for all SOs
- Description and differentiation of target groups and beneficiaries for each IP
- Description of the specific territories targeted for each IP

The main results and examples of actions per SO can be displayed as follows:

| IP | Specific objective | | Main result | | Examples of actions |
|----|--|---|--|---|---|
| 1b | 1.1 To improve sustainable linkages among actors of the central European innovation systems for strengthening regional innovation capacity in central Europe | ↔ | Increased and more sustainable linkages of actors in the innovation systems achieved through transnational cooperation strengthening the innovation capacity within the central European regions | ↔ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Establishing and further strengthening transnational innovation networks and clusters, also supporting their internationalisation – Enhancing the transfer of R&D-results from research institutions to the business sector (in particular SMEs) leading to new services and products – Building transnational links for improving existing and developing new services supporting innovation in businesses – Strengthening links between the public sector, finance institutions as well as the business sector (in particular SMEs) to design and test new structures and services that facilitate the access to financing of innovation – Increasing cooperation between the research sector, the public and private sectors to stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship (e.g. reduction of administrative barriers of innovation, public procurement of innovative products and services, social innovation, etc.) |
| 1b | 1.2 To improve skills and entrepreneurial competences for advancing economic and social innovation in central European regions | ↔ | Improved capacities of the private and public sector for skills development of employees and entrepreneurial competences achieved through transnational cooperation driving economic and social innovation in central European regions | ↔ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increasing skills of employees in the business sector (particularly SMEs) regarding novel technologies (e.g. eco-innovation, low-carbon technologies, ICT, key enabling technologies, etc.), innovative products, services or processes and social innovation contributing to regional smart specialisation strategies – Developing and implementing strategies and tools to improve creativity and entrepreneurship mind sets building on different business cultures and on all levels of education – Developing and implementing strategies and tools for improving technological and management competences for entrepreneurship for economic and social innovation (e.g. healthcare, social inclusion: |

| IP | Specific objective | | Main result | | Examples of actions |
|----|--|---|--|---|---|
| | | | | | <p>minorities, disabled persons, elderly etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Adapting, developing, and testing innovative learning systems for skills and entrepreneurial competences considering demographic change challenges (e.g. ageing society, youth unemployment, shrinking regions facing skills shortages etc.) |
| 4c | 2.1 To develop and implement solutions for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy usage in public infrastructures | ↔ | Improved capacities of the public sector and related entities for increased energy efficiency and renewable energy use of public infrastructures in central Europe achieved through transnational cooperation” | ↔ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing, testing and implementing policies, strategies and solutions to improve the energy efficiency of public infrastructures including buildings as well as to increase the use of renewable energies – Developing and testing innovative management approaches to increase regional capacities for improving the energy performance of public infrastructure including buildings (e.g. energy managers) – Developing and implementing solutions for the application of novel energy saving technologies that will increase the energy efficiency of public infrastructures including buildings – Harmonising concepts, standards and certification systems at transnational level to improve the energy performance of public infrastructure including buildings – Strengthening the capacity of the public sector to develop and implement innovative energy services, incentives and financing schemes (e.g. energy performance contracting, PPP models, etc.) |
| 4e | 2.2 To improve territorially based low carbon energy planning strategies and policies supporting climate | ↔ | Improved capacities of the public sector and related entities for territorially based low-carbon energy | ↔ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing and implementing integrated local/regional strategies and plans to increase the use of endogenous renewable energy potentials and improve regional energy performance – Designing and testing concepts and tools for the exploitation of |

| IP | Specific objective | | Main result | | Examples of actions |
|----|--|---|--|---|--|
| | change mitigation | | planning and policies in central European regions achieved through transnational cooperation | | <p>endogenous renewable energy resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing and implementing management strategies to improve the energy performance in both the public and the private sector (especially in SMEs) – Developing demand-focused strategies and policies to reduce energy consumption (e.g. smart metering, distribution of smart consumer applications, etc.) – Developing and testing solutions for improved interconnections and coordination of energy networks targeting the integration and use of renewable energy sources |
| 4e | 2.3 To improve capacities for mobility planning in functional urban areas to lower CO2 emissions |  | Improved capacities of the public sector and related entities for low carbon mobility planning in central Europe's functional urban areas achieved through transnational cooperation |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing and implementing integrated mobility concepts and action plans for reducing CO2 emissions – Setting up and /or adapting governance systems as a basis for integrated low-carbon mobility in functional urban areas – Developing and testing concepts and strategies (including innovative financing and investment models) to facilitate the introduction of novel low-carbon technologies in the public transport sector in functional urban areas – Developing and implementing services and products fostering smart low-carbon mobility in functional urban areas (e.g. multimodal services, etc.) |
| 6c | 3.1 To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources |  | Improved integrated environmental management capacities of the public sector and related entities for the sustainable use of |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing and implementing integrated strategies and tools for the sustainable management of protected or environmentally highly valuable areas (e.g. biodiversity, landscapes, eco-systems, etc.) – Developing and implementing integrated strategies and tools to sustainably use natural resources for regional development, thus avoiding potential use conflicts (e.g. with tourism, transport, industry, agriculture, |

| IP | Specific objective | | Main result | | Examples of actions |
|----|--|---|---|---|--|
| | | | natural heritage and resources in central Europe achieved through transnational cooperation | | <p>energy etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing and testing the application of innovative technologies and tools facilitating effective integrated environmental management (e.g. remediation technologies, monitoring tools etc.) – Developing and testing applications to improve the efficient management of natural resources in public institutions and businesses (e.g. reduction of natural resource consumption, closed loop systems) – Harmonising environmental management concepts and tools on the transnational level for risk prevention and management (e.g. flood risk management plans) and to reduce negative climate change impacts on the environment (e.g. adaptation measures) |
| 6c | 3.2 To improve capacities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources | ↔ | Improved capacities of the public and private sector and related entities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources in central Europe achieved through transnational cooperation | ↔ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing and implementing strategies and policies for valorising cultural heritage and resources and/or the potentials of the cultural and creative industries – Developing and implementing integrated local/regional development strategies and concepts that build on cultural heritage to foster sustainable economic growth and employment (e.g. in the tourism sector) – Developing and testing innovative management tools for the preservation and sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources (e.g. ICT applications) – Establishing and strengthening transnational cooperation among relevant actors to foster the sustainable use and the promotion of cultural heritage sites in central Europe |
| 6e | 3.3 To improve environmental management capacities of functional | ↔ | Improved integrated environmental management | ↔ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing and implementing strategies and tools (including innovative financing and investment models) to manage and improve environmental quality (air, water, waste, soil, climate) as well as to tackle natural and |

| IP | Specific objective | | Main result | | Examples of actions |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|
| | urban areas to make them more liveable places | | capacities of the public sector and related entities in central Europe's functional urban areas achieved through transnational cooperation for making them more liveable places | | <p>man-made risks in functional urban areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthening the capacity for environmental planning and management (e.g. participatory planning mechanisms and decision making processes) at the level of functional urban areas – Developing and implementing integrated strategies, policies and tools to reduce land-use conflicts in functional urban areas (e.g. urban sprawl, shrinkage and fragmentation also in the view of social implications) – Developing and implementing integrated strategies and pilot applications for the rehabilitation and reactivation of brownfield sites – Developing concepts and implementing environmental pilot applications to support the development towards smart cities (e.g. ICT applications, environmental technologies) |
| 7b | 4.1 To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks |  | Improved and coordinated planning capacities of the public sector and related entities for regional passenger transport systems in central Europe linked to national and European transport networks achieved through transnational cooperation |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing and implementing strategies (including innovative financing and investment models) to link sustainable passenger transport in particular in peripheral areas to the TEN-T network as well as to the primary, secondary and tertiary transport nodes – Developing and implementing coordinated strategies, tools and pilot applications to improve regional public transport systems in particular across borders (e.g. commuter connections, interoperability, etc.) – Developing concepts and testing pilot applications for smart regional mobility (e.g. multimodal ticketing, ICT tools, routes on demand, etc.) – Developing coordinated concepts, standards and tools for improved mobility services in the public interest (e.g. for disadvantaged groups, for shrinking regions, ...) |
| 7c | 4.2 To improve coordination |  | Improved coordination |  | – Developing and implementing coordinated strategies (including |

| IP | Specific objective | | Main result | | Examples of actions |
|----|---|--|--|--|--|
| | among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environment-friendly freight solutions | | among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environment-friendly freight solutions in central Europe achieved through transnational cooperation | | <p>innovative financing and investment models) for strengthening the multimodality of environmentally friendly freight transport systems (e.g. railway, river, or sea transport)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing and implementing coordination and collaboration mechanisms between multimodal freight transport actors – Developing and implementing coordinated concepts, management tools and services aimed at increasing the share of environmentally friendly logistics through optimised freight transport chains (e.g. multimodal transnational freight transport flows) – Developing and testing coordinated strategies and concepts for “greening” the last mile of freight transport (e.g. logistics planning) |

Additionally, and in line with the ETC CP model the CE 2020 Programme defines following different types of outputs which are to be achieved by the programme's intervention – generally described as policy learning and/or implementation-oriented outputs at transnational level:

- developed/implemented strategies and/or action plans,
- developed/tested/implemented tools,
- prepared investments,
- leveraged funds,
- implemented pilot actions (including pilot investments),
- capacity building outputs (including training).³⁶

Supported by the input of 42 interviews with thematic experts from all CE 2020 MS as well as experts at EU level, the ex-ante evaluator carried out an in-depth analysis of all different elements of the intervention logic for each of the four priority axes of the CE 2020 Programme and brought in comprehensive suggestions and recommendations for improving the system of objectives, results, outputs and actions in each priority axis.

Based on both the interviews as well as the other methodological approaches, the ex-ante evaluator developed various suggestions for improvement as well as a set of formal recommendations, targeted at improving and streamlining the elements of the intervention logic. The CP in its different draft versions has well progressed and all interim recommendations have satisfactorily been integrated. Detailed information on the uptake of the evaluator's recommendations during the process can be found in Annex B (recommendation tracker).

As a result of various revisions, the different elements of the intervention logic are now presented in a logical, complete and distinctive way. The definitions and levels of the different elements (objectives, results, outputs and actions) are well respected, no overlaps occur. The descriptions of the elements comprise a precise wording with avoidance of any paraphrasing.

In line with the theory of change³⁷, at result level the CE 2020 Programmes focusses on results which are likely to be achieved by a transnational cooperation programme. Consequently the term "capacities" often comes to the fore. Here, it has to be pointed out that final CP provides an appropriate definition of the term (in Annex 02 of the CP – Glossary). Together with the further information provided on the types of outputs and the actions (including their examples) the presented intervention logic – even without looking at the level of indicators – is considered as fully comprehensible and adequate.

Following findings of the ex-ante evaluator regarding the different priority axes can be highlighted:

Priority axis 1 (TO 1) – SO 1.1 and SO 1.2

With priority axis 1, the CE 2020 Programme targets two different, clearly distinguishable objectives – both of key relevance for increasing the competitiveness and innovation capacity in central Europe. Firstly, the innovation systems are targeted, namely the linkages

³⁶ All types of outputs are covered by output indicators with the exception of "investment preparation" and "leveraged funds".

³⁷ cf. COM GUIDANCE DOCUMENT ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION – EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND AND COHESION FUND, p. 6-7

among their actors, with related actions covering e.g. establishing transnational innovation networks and clusters, new links and cooperation between relevant actors in central Europe and also covering direct transfer processes technology transfer/new products, processes, policies, services etc. (SO 1.1). The second objective aims at improving skills and entrepreneurial competences for advancing innovation (SO 1.2) by appropriate means described along different actions such as strengthening competences and skills for the application of novel technologies as well as focussing on social innovation. Thus, a sufficient distinction at level of the objectives is presented, underpinned by particular linkages between the different elements which follow a clear logical chain.

Priority axis 2 (TO 4) – SO 2.1, SO 2.2 and SO 2.3

Priority axis 2 comprises a set of objectives, which all aim at improved capacities of the public sector and related entities for a shift towards a low-carbon economy. Three different fields of interventions are considered most relevant for central Europe: 1) increased energy efficiency and renewable energy use of public infrastructures, 2) territorially based low-carbon energy planning and policies, 3) low carbon mobility planning in functional urban areas. Possible actions are described specifically for each of the different objectives, considering various different opportunities how to achieve the envisaged results. The relevant regional focus is often emphasised as well as the added value of measures at transnational level.

Priority axis 3 (TO 6) – SO 3.1, SO 3.2 and SO 3.3

Priority axis 3 divides the twofold approach of cooperating on natural and cultural resources into three objectives – addressing improved capacities for integrated environmental management approaches including risk prevention and management as well as the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources (SO 3.2). The environmental dimension is split into two objectives, one targeting the sustainable use and protection of natural resources and heritage (SO 3.1) and the second one targeting relevant topics of environmental management in urban functional areas (SO 3.3), such as environmental quality comprising air, water, waste, soil, climate. Under this priority axis, a relatively wide set of actions is compiled which is backed by the success of interventions under the preceding programme CE 2007-2014. All actions can be clearly assigned to the objectives and no significant overlaps occur.

Priority axis 4 (TO 7) – SO 4.1 and SO 4.2

With priority axis 4 the CE 2020 Programme successfully fills a specific niche of intervention by TNC in the field of connectivity. SO 4.1, addressing the improved planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems, puts its emphasis on relevant coordination aspects which can be well served by TNC operations. A high added value is guaranteed by the envisaged measures for linking sustainable passenger transport to the TEN-T network. With its specific scope, well underpinned by the envisaged actions, a clear distinction and high complementarity to SO 2.3 (urban mobility) is given. The elements presented under SO 4.2., addressing coordination among freight transport stakeholders with a strong focus on multimodal environmentally-friendly solutions, show a high permeability and the envisaged achievements appear most likely for TNC operations.

Regarding the final CP, the appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- The intervention logic of the CE 2020 Programme is characterised by clear causal links. The information provided is deemed adequate and sufficiently precise.
- For all four priority axes the relevant target groups as well as the beneficiaries are described in an appropriate and precise way, considering the most relevant mechanism

and opportunities of the programme's intervention logic as well as the effectiveness of a TNC programme in each priority axis.

- Sufficient evidence is provided; choices are backed by previous experience and evaluations/studies.
- The CE 2020 Programme follows and supports an integrated territorial approach in its intervention logic that is in line with identified territorial challenges and needs of the programme area.

8. Horizontal Principles

Article 55(3) (l-m) CPR requires the ex-ante evaluator to assess "the adequacy of planned measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women and to prevent any discrimination and to promote sustainable development".

The assessment of the horizontal principles relates to Section 8 (incl. Sub-Sections 8.1. – 8.3.) of the final CP as well as to the different priority axes, including priority axis 5 Technical Assistance (Section 2 of the CP) and Section 5 Implementing Provisions.

The assessment of the horizontal principles comprises following evaluation questions:

EQ 23: Does the strategy ensure equal opportunities between men and women?

EQ 24: Are the planned measures to prevent discrimination adequate?

EQ 25: Does the programme explain how it will address environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience as well as risk prevention and management in the selection of operations?

EQ 26: Are the planned measures to promote sustainable development adequate?

Section 8 describes the CE 2020 strategy for ensuring sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination as well as equality between men and women according to the ETC CP model. Under each subchapter concrete actions and measures at operation as well as programme level are described.

Equality between men and women: Providing equal opportunities requires both specific actions and the mainstreaming of the gender perspective. The final CP describes the programme's contribution to the promotion of equality between men and women and, where appropriate, the planned arrangements to ensure the integration of the gender perspective at programme as well as operation level. Section 8.3 describes the CE 2020 strategy for ensuring equal opportunities at programme and operation level. Activities and actions are identified to encourage and promote equal opportunities. On programme level, a self-assessment exercise on gender mainstreaming is provided for, which is considered as a concrete, if rather weak, enforcement measure.

Prevention of discrimination: Measures to prevent discrimination are regarded as relevant at programme and operation level; at the latter both as the subject and result of operations, such as those improving access to labour markets for disadvantaged groups or addressing core-periphery issues. Reference is also given to ensuring equal and barrier-free accessibility to physical investments and pilot infrastructure. The final CP generally states that all operations and the programme have to adhere to non-discrimination principles, it also outlines what this could potentially mean in practice for each Priority Axis. Thus, appropriate orientation is provided with regards to the integration of the prevention of discrimination into operations.

Environmental issues & Sustainable development: Section 8.1 of the final CP outlines the general strategy as well as concrete steps for addressing environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management. It describes general requirements for the selection and monitoring of operations and encourages operations to integrate activities that tackle environmental concerns. Operations also need to include a description of relevant environmental and sustainability issues in their applications. In addition, the implications of environmental issues for priority axis 1 - 4 are listed in detail, which can serve as a helpful guideline for operation applicants, but also for operation assessment. For priority axis 3 it should be kept in mind, that there may be a “trade-off” necessary between cultural and natural heritage protection, and that therefore the environmental sustainability of all actions should be safeguarded.

By implementing a Strategic Environmental Assessment, the CE 2020 Programme adheres to the requirement of considering of the cross-cutting sustainable development principle in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the programme, including the selection of operation (i.e. operations, contracts, actions or groups of operations as defined in Article 2 (7) CPR).

Regarding the final CP, the appraisal of the ex-ante evaluator can be summarised as follows:

- CE 2020 strategy ensures equal opportunities at programme and operation level. Concrete activities and actions target at the encouragement of actively promoting gender mainstreaming or integrating equal participation of women and men. At programme level, a self-assessment exercise with regards to gender mainstreaming is provided for.
- The strategy refers to the objective to prevent discrimination on operation and programme level and non-discrimination principles are anchored successfully.
- The programme recognises sustainable development as a key principle and is committed to it. In the programme preparation stage a SEA was conducted and therein made recommendations integrated. Furthermore a sustainable development of the central Europe territory is promoted through the foreseen programme strategy. In addition, the sustainability will also be considered as criterion in the selection of operations and operations will have to report on it.
- By implementing a Strategic Environmental Assessment the CE 2020 Programme adheres to the requirement of considering the cross-cutting sustainable development principle (defined in Article 8 CPR).

Component 2: Indicators, monitoring and evaluation

9. Relevance and clarity of the chosen programme indicators

Legal basis for the ex-ante evaluation of this theme is Article 55 (e) of the CPR, stating the ex-ante evaluation should assess „the relevance and the clarity of the proposed programme indicators“.

During the evaluation process the relevance as well as the clarity of the chosen programme indicators were evaluated and formal recommendations were given.

The following analysis of the relevance and the clarity of the chosen programme indicators deals with Section 2 of the final CP.

Relevance of the chosen programme indicators

The assessment of the relevance of the chosen programme indicators comprises following evaluation questions:

EQ 27: Are the programme-specific result indicators responsive to the policy?³⁸

EQ 28.a: Do the programme-specific result indicators cover (one of) the most important intended changes?

EQ 28.b: Are the programme-specific output indicators relevant to the actions to be supported?

EQ 29: Are common output indicators used where relevant to the content of the investment priorities and specific objectives?

The indicator system of the CP CE 2020 consists of different indicator types serving different purposes. **Programme-specific result indicators** - providing information on the progress made in achieving the intended changes of the programme³⁹ - have been determined for each of the 10 specific objectives within priority axes 1-4. Beside this, a set of **programme-specific output indicators** - measuring the physical outputs of the supported actions⁴⁰ - have been determined for each of the seven selected investment priorities. These indicators have been developed on basis of an output typology which specifies different output types. By adapting their focus to the specific objective of each investment priority, the output indicators have been further specified. Apart from that **common output indicators** have been selected for priority axes 1-4 – on basis of the list of common output indicators in the Annex of the ETC regulation.⁴¹

With regard to priority axis 5 (Technical Assistance) programme-specific output indicators have been determined. . The selected output indicators for priority axis 5 are not linked to the output typology as described in the previous paragraph. These output indicators are derived from the actions selected for specific objective 5.1 and 5.2. Since the Union

³⁸ Given that the thematic objective and investment priority do not exist for priority axis 5 (Technical assistance), the programme-specific result indicators have not been considered as part of this question.

³⁹ cf. COM (2013): MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY – Guidance Document on Ex-ante Evaluation

⁴⁰ ibid

⁴¹ cf. COM (2013): REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal

contribution foreseen for priority axis 5 does not exceed EUR 15 million⁴², it is not necessary to determine programme-specific result indicators for the Technical Assistance.

Assessing the relevance of the chosen programme-specific result indicators, it is important that these indicators are responsive to the policy. With regard to this, the evaluation has revealed that all result indicators are consistent with the corresponding investment priority.

The consistency between the programme-specific result indicators and the corresponding specific objectives - including the intended changes - is an important issue which must be considered in this programming period. As shown in the figure below, the analysis for priority axis 1-4 displays that the programme-specific result indicators, the corresponding specific objective and its anticipated result are consistent (cf. Section 2 of the final CP).

| Specific objective | Main result envisaged by the specific objective | Programme-specific result indicator |
|---|--|--|
| 1.1. To improve sustainable linkages among actors of the innovation systems for strengthening regional innovation capacity in central Europe. | Increased and more sustainable linkages of actors in the innovation systems achieved through transnational cooperation strengthening the innovation capacity within the central European regions | Status of linkages among actors of the innovation systems achieved through transnational cooperation in central European regions |
| 1.2. To improve skills and entrepreneurial competences for advancing economic and social innovation in central European regions | Improved capacities of the private and public sector for skills development of employees and entrepreneurial competences achieved through transnational cooperation driving economic and social innovation in central European regions | Status of capacities of the public and private sectors for skills development of employees and entrepreneurial competences achieved through transnational cooperation driving economic and social innovation in central European regions |
| 2.1. To develop and implement solutions for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy usage in public infrastructures | Improved capacities of the public sector and related entities for increased energy efficiency and renewable energy use of public infrastructure in central Europe achieved through transnational cooperation. | Status of capacities of the public sector and related entities for increased energy efficiency and renewable energy use in public infrastructures achieved through transnational cooperation |
| 2.2. To improve territorially based energy planning strategies and policies supporting climate change mitigation | Improved capacities of the public sector and related entities for territorially based low carbon energy planning and policies in central European regions achieved through transnational cooperation. | Status of capacities of the public sector and related entities for territorially based low carbon energy planning and policies achieved through transnational cooperation |

⁴² cf. COM (2013): REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal

| Specific objective | Main result envisaged by the specific objective | Programme-specific result indicator |
|--|--|--|
| 2.3. To improve capacities for mobility planning in functional urban areas to lower CO ₂ emissions | Improved capacities of the public sector and related entities for low carbon mobility planning in central Europe's functional urban areas achieved through transnational cooperation. | Status of capacities of the public sector and related entities for low carbon mobility planning in functional urban areas achieved through transnational cooperation |
| 3.1. To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources | Improved integrated environmental management capacities of the public sector and related entities for the sustainable use of natural heritage and resources in central Europe achieved through transnational cooperation. | Status of integrated environmental management capacities of the public sector and related entities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources achieved through transnational cooperation |
| 3.2. To improve capacities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources | Improved capacities of the public and private sector and related entities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources in central Europe achieved through transnational cooperation. | Status of capacities of the public and private sector for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources achieved through transnational cooperation |
| 3.3. To improve environmental management of functional urban areas to make them more liveable places | Improved integrated environmental management capacities of the public sector and related entities in central Europe's functional urban areas achieved through transnational cooperation for making them more liveable places | Status of integrated environmental management capacities of the public sector and related entities in functional urban areas achieved through transnational cooperation for making them more liveable places |
| 4.1. To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks | Improved and coordinated planning capacities of the public sector and related entities for regional passenger transport systems in central Europe linked to national and European transport networks achieved through transnational cooperation. | Status of coordinated planning capacities of the public sector and related entities for regional passenger transport systems linked to national and European transport networks achieved through transnational cooperation |
| 4.2. To improve coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environmentally-friendly freight solutions | Improved coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environment-friendly freight solutions in central Europe achieved through transnational cooperation. | Status of coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environmentally-friendly freight solutions achieved through transnational cooperation |

Figure 9: Overview of the specific objectives, their main envisaged results and the corresponding result indicator related to the evaluation criteria "relevance"

Source: blue! | DSN, 2014 based on the final CP.

With regard to the relevance of the programme-specific output indicators, it can be noted that output indicators are reflected in the actions which are to be supported. For example, “Developing and implementing integrated strategies and tools for sustainable management of protected or environmentally highly valuable areas” is one action which is to be supported as part of specific objective 3.1. This action is reflected accordingly in the two output indicators “Number of strategies and action plans developed and/or implemented for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources” and “Number of tools developed and/or implemented for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources”.

Having a look at the selected common output indicators it can be stated that the explanation for their selection seems reasonable (see cf. Annex 08 of the final CP). Thus, these common output indicators are appropriate for priority axes 1-4.

During the evaluation process no recommendations as well as suggestions targeting at strengthening the relevance of the chosen programme indicators have been given by the evaluators since the relevance of the proposed indicators has been reasonable.

All in all, it can be stated that the selected programme indicators are relevant to the overall intervention logic as well as to the intended investment priorities and specific objectives:

- The programme-specific result indicators are consistent with the corresponding investment priority.
- The programme-specific result indicators cover the most important changes of the corresponding specific objective and are relevant to measuring the progress towards achieving the changes intended by the Cooperation Programme CE 2020.
- The programme-specific output indicators are relevant to the actions which are to be supported.
- The selected common output indicators are appropriate for priority axes 1-4.

Clarity of the chosen programme indicators

The assessment of the clarity of the chosen programme indicators comprises following evaluation questions:

EQ 30: Do the programme-specific indicators have a clear title, an unequivocal and easy to understand definition?

EQ 31: Are the programme-specific result indicators robust against outliers or extreme values?

EQ 32: Do the programme-specific result indicators have publicly available data sources for the choice of baselines, target values and definitions of the indicator?

The composition of the indicator system of the CP CE 2020 is already described in the chapter above.

With regard to the final CP, it can be noted that the titles of the chosen programme-specific result and output indicators are comprehensive. As assistance, to understand the titles of the result indicator correctly, a definition of key words which are part of the titles is provided in Annex 08 of the final CP.

To ensure a common and unequivocal understanding of the programme-specific output indicators, a clear description of each output indicator is included in Annex 08 of the final

CP. A comprehensive explanation of the content of each result indicator is as well provided in Annex 08 of the final CP.

Having a look at the methodology of data collection, it can be assumed that the programme-specific result indicators are robust against outliers. The procedure for data collection (baselines and progress monitoring) is well and detailed described in Annex 08 of the final CP and the “Concept for establishing result indicator baselines and measuring progress”⁴³. The result indicators for priority axis 1-4 will be derived from structured online surveys in combination with a focus group approach⁴⁴. The surveys and transnational focus group discussions will be conducted at different stages of the programme implementation by the end of 2014/ early 2015, 2018, 2020 and 2023. Therefore a transnational expert panel will be established per priority axis in order to receive professional expert input from all participating member states of the CP CE 2020. The online surveys will be conducted by national thematic experts⁴⁵, representing all nine CE Member States, and will be carried out in a consistent manner which means that all online surveys will include the same questionnaire. Furthermore, the survey will be conducted, if possible, with the same experts, so as to ensure the consistency and comparability of the survey results and thus of the result indicators. With regard to the identification of suitable experts various criteria will be applied e.g.: proven thematic expertise, in the respective field, knowledge of the relevant policy framework at regional, national and EU-level, experiences in Structural Funds and the European Territorial Cooperation objective, preferably the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme. This approach will ensure a reasonable quality of the survey results.

During the evaluation process the ex-ante evaluator developed various suggestions as well as a set of recommendations targeting at an improved clarity of the chosen programme indicators. The CP in its different draft versions has well progressed and all interim recommendations have satisfactorily been integrated. Further information on the uptake of recommendations during the process can be found in Annex B.

All in all, it can be stated that the clarity of the selected indicators focussing on different aspects is appropriate:

- The chosen programme-specific result and output indicators have clear titles.
- Definitions of the programme-specific result and output indicators are provided in Annex 08 of the final CP.
- With regard to the selected method of data collection, it can be deduced that the programme-specific result indicators are robust against outliers.

⁴³ This document is not part of the final CP.

⁴⁴ Since priority axis 3 covers natural heritage as well as cultural heritage, two focus groups will be established for this priority axis.

⁴⁵ Thematic experts for each priority axis consisting of by at least one thematic expert per MS will be addressed.

10. Feasibility of the choice of the quantified targets

Legal basis for the ex-ante evaluation of this theme is Article 55 (g) of the CPR, stating the ex-ante evaluation should assess „whether the quantified target values for indicators are realistic, having regard to the support envisaged from the ESI Funds”.

During the evaluation process the feasibility of the choice of the quantified targets was evaluated.

The following analysis of the “feasibility of the choice of the quantified targets” refers to Section 2 of the final CP.

Feasibility of the choice of the quantified targets

The assessment of the feasibility of the choice of the quantified targets comprises following evaluation questions:

EQ 33: Do baselines for the programme-specific result indicators exist?

EQ 34: Are the quantified/qualitative target values of the indicators realistic?

The existence of a baseline for the programme-specific result indicators in the CP CE 2020 is ensured. Data for the description of the baseline situation of each result indicators will be collected during structured surveys combined with focus group discussions carried out by the CE 2020 Programme most probably by the end of 2014/ early 2015. Data for the baseline cannot be included at the time of CP submission due to the non-availability of required data and the time needed for data collection via the foreseen structured surveys and focus groups approaches. For monitoring the progress of the result indicators it is planned to apply the same approach in 2018, 2020 and 2023.

| Measurement unit | Sum of targets of output indicators per priority axis | Output indicator target share (PA 1-4) | Estimated approved operations | Budget share (PA 1-4) | Budget share (ERDF) |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | number | in % | number | in % | in Euro |
| Priority axis 1 Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive | 305 | 30% | 30 | 28% | 69.042.711 |
| 2 Cooperating on low-carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE | 181 | 18% | 19 | 18% | 44.384.600 |
| 3 Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE | 420 | 41% | 38 | 36% | 88.769.200 |
| 4 Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE | 110 | 11% | 13 | 12% | 29.589.733 |
| Sum of output indicator targets | 1.016 | 100% | 100 | 94% ⁴⁶ | 231.786.245 |

Figure 10: Share of targets of programme-specific output indicators per priority axis and the foreseen budget share

Source: blue | DSN, 2014

⁴⁶ The remaining 6% are allocated to priority axis 5 “Technical assistance”.

The table above shows the share of programme-specific output indicator targets per priority axis and the foreseen budget share. The shares are very similar and seem to be reasonable. With regard to this, it has to be considered that the here defined programme-specific output indicators have a very different character and do not contain all outputs of operations. It has to be considered that parts of the operation budgets (about 15-20%) are also needed for supporting actions (e.g. management or communication) and other outputs which are not part of the output indicator system (e.g. meetings etc.). The theoretical average volume of the available budget per output is about 228 thousand Euro ERDF. The number of outputs as expressed in the programme-specific output indicator system (1.016 outputs) seems to be reasonable in relation to the assumed budget of 231.786.245,28 Euro ERDF for the priority axes 1-4. 100 approved operations are foreseen. An average operation volume of about 2,31 Million Euro ERDF seems to be reasonable.

In Annex 08 of the final CP the calculation of target values for the selected common output indicators is described comprehensively. Thus, the target values of the common output indicators seem realistic.

During the evaluation process no recommendations targeting at enhancing the feasibility of the choice of the quantified targets have been given since the feasibility of the proposed indicators has been appropriate.

All in all, it can be stated that the feasibility of the choice of the quantified targets is reasonable:

- Baselines will be collected for the programme-specific result indicators. Data for the baseline cannot be included at the time of CP submission due to the non-availability of required data and the time needed for data collection via the foreseen surveys and focus groups approaches.
- To measure the progress of the result indicators data will be gathered at three different times during the programme implementation – in 2018, 2020 and 2023 (the end of the programme implementation). Reasonable methods will be applied to collect the data.
- The target values of the programme-specific output indicators and the common output indicators seem realistic.

11. Suitability of the chosen milestones

Legal basis for the ex-ante evaluation of this theme is Article 55 (k) of the CPR, stating the ex-ante evaluation should assess „the suitability of the milestones selected for the performance framework”.

During the evaluation process the “suitability of the chosen milestones” was evaluated.

The following analysis of the suitability of the chosen milestones refers to Section 2 of the final CP.

Composition and feasibility of the chosen milestones

The assessment of the suitability of the chosen milestones comprises following evaluation questions:

EQ 35: Are the milestones suitable which were selected for the performance framework?

EQ 36: Are the chosen milestones adequately reflecting the nature and complexity of the programme?

EQ 37: Are the chosen milestones realistic in relation to the timing of the reviews?

EQ 38: Are indicators selected for the chosen milestones in each priority axis?

EQ 39: Have all indicators of the milestones quantitative/qualitative target values?

EQ 40: Will the data be available for the milestones at the key review points?

EQ 41: Can the milestones be achieved within the given timeframe? Do the thematic objectives, priorities and corresponding objectives comply with the CSF?

For each priority axis a Performance Framework has been established in the final CP. Each Performance Framework consists of the following components: two or three aggregated output indicators, one financial indicator and one key implementation step.

The **output indicators** in the Performance Framework for each Priority are presented on an aggregated level. Each aggregated output indicator consists of the same three types of outputs. Furthermore, these output indicators are adapted to the corresponding specific objectives within each priority axis. This approach ensures well the consistency with the content of the specific objective. As laid down in the Commission Implementing Regulation⁴⁷ which sets out, among other issues, the determination of milestones and targets in the Performance framework, the share of the chosen output indicators must exceed 50 % of the financial allocations to the priority axis. With regard to this, the chosen outputs (strategies and actions plans, tools, pilot actions) will likely illustrate 70% to 80% of the financial allocation⁴⁸.

The milestones based on output indicators have no target values set for the year 2018. This is due to the fact that in 2018 hardly any operations will be finalised and related reporting and monitoring closed. Therefore, a **key implementation step** has been defined for every Performance Framework counting the number of approved operations in each priority axis.

The total number of operations expected to be approved in 2023 is estimated to be 100 operations. In the CENTRAL EUROPE 2007-2013 period, 124 operations have been

⁴⁷ cf. COM (2014): Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 215/2014. 7 March 2014

⁴⁸ cf. Based on experiences of the current programme period 2007-2013 by the JTS.

approved.⁴⁹ From this respect the final target value assuming slightly higher budget volumes than in the 2007-2013 period will be realistic and achievable having in mind the final budget of the programme is similar to the budget of the current programme. The final target values set for each priority axis with regard to approved operations corresponds with the budget share of the programme budget foreseen for each priority axis (cf. Figure 11). From this point of view the final target value of approved operations in every priority praxis seems to be realistic and achievable.

| Performance Framework | Number of approved operations in 2023 | | Budget share without priority axis 5 (TA) |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| | Final target value in 2023 | Percentage of final target value sum | |
| Priority axis 1 | 30 | 30 % | 28% |
| Priority axis 2 | 19 | 19 % | 18% |
| Priority axis 3 | 38 | 38 % | 36% |
| Priority axis 4 | 13 | 13 % | 12% |
| Sum | 100 | 100 % | 94 % |

Figure 11: Target value of number of approved operations in 2023 and budget share

Source: blue | DSN, 2013

Furthermore, each priority axis includes one **financial indicator** which indicates the financial progress of each priority axis.

Regarding the final target values for the aggregated output indicators and financial indicators it can positively be pointed out that no extra data collection will be necessary. These data will be based on the information given in the progress reports of the operations.

During the evaluation process no recommendations targeting at improving the suitability of the chosen milestones have been given since the suitability of the chosen milestones has been appraised as reasonable.

All in all, it can be stated that the set-up of the performance framework and suitability of the chosen milestones and targets is appropriate for the monitoring of the programme:

- The approach for setting-up the Performance Framework is well justified as described within the Annex 08 of the final CP.
- The components of the Performance Framework comply with the formal requirements as laid down in the COM Common Provision Regulation, Annex II.
- The composition of the Performance Framework seems reasonable and its components capture relevant information on the progress of each priority axis.
- The final target values of approved operations seem to be realistic and achievable.

⁴⁹ cf. CENTRAL EUROPE (2013): Approved projects

12. Suitability of the chosen administrative capacity, data collection procedures and evaluation

Legal basis for the ex-ante evaluation of this theme is Article 55 (i), Article 55 (j) and Article 55 (n) of the CPR, stating the ex-ante evaluation should assess „the adequacy of human resources and administrative capacity for management of the programme“, "the suitability of the procedures for monitoring the programme and for collecting the data necessary to carry out evaluations“ as well as “measures planned to reduce the administrative burden on beneficiaries”.

During the evaluation process the suitability of the chosen administrative capacity as well as the data collection procedures and evaluation were evaluated and formal recommendations were given.

The following analysis of the suitability of the chosen administrative capacity as well as the analysis of the data collection procedures and evaluation deals with Section 5 and 7 of the final CP.

Human resources and administrative capacity for management of the programme

The assessment of human resources and administrative capacity for management of the programme comprises following evaluation questions:

EQ 42: Is the implementation structure adequate in relation to the size and complexity of the programme?

EQ 43: Is the human resources and administrative capacity adequate for the management of the programme?

EQ 44: Has the implementation structure and the human resources and administrative capacity a positive benchmark in relation to the current structure?

The intended implementation structure of the CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020 Programme regarding the involvement of administrative programme bodies is almost identical to the current programme structure. Thus, the implementation structure of the current programme provides an appropriate reference and may therefore function as a benchmark for the implementation structure of the future programme. The administrative bodies involved in both programmes include the Monitoring Committee, the Managing Authority the Joint Secretariat, and the Audit Authority. In the CE 2020 Programme the function of Certifying Authority (CA) will be carried out by the Managing Authority (MA). This shift of responsibility is not associated with significant problems since both the CA and MA are currently already located in the same organisation (in different departments of the City of Vienna) and work together in a close and frictionless manner.

With regard to the Monitoring Committee, the evaluators advocate the continuation of the possibility for the network of national contact points (NCP) to participate in the MC meetings with observer status. By involving the NCP in important discussions during the MC meetings, their connection to the programme will be strengthened.

The ex-ante evaluators appreciate that the Managing Authority continues to carry out various control measures in the next programme period. These control measures are not only designed to verify the effective functioning, but also the quality standards of the control system set up by each Member State.

Regarding the Joint Secretariat (JS), the ex-ante evaluators advocate that the JS coordinates and cooperates with the network of contact points as well as the network of national designated controllers. This provides the JS with the opportunity to strengthen the communication between and the exchange of experience among contact points. Furthermore, the JS will have a strong connection to the national controllers, so as to secure a smooth functioning of the financial control system. Furthermore, it can positively be pointed out that the JS intends to continue visiting operations (e.g. participating in steering committee meetings). Besides providing the JS with the opportunity to gain direct insight into the operations, these visits enable it to lend support and assistance during the meetings as well as to avoid unintended operation developments.

Besides the almost identical implementation structure of the future and the current programme, both programmes are consisting of the same number and nearly the same composition of Member States⁵⁰ and both are characterised by an almost identical land area and total population. Based on the experiences made in the current programme the evaluation revealed that the human resources are sufficient to fulfil the tasks of the JS. This also holds true for "peak" phases (e.g. periods where both operation monitoring and assessment runs in parallel) during which the workload of the JS is very high.

During the evaluation process the ex-ante evaluator developed various suggestions as well as a set of recommendations targeting at an improved management of the CE 2020 Programme. The CP in its different draft versions has well progressed and all interim recommendations have satisfactorily been integrated. Further information on the uptake of recommendations during the process can be found in Annex B.

All in all, it can be stated that the human resources and administrative capacity are appropriate for the management of the CE 2020 Programme:

- The tasks of each programme body as specified in the Cooperation Programme for the next programme period are in line with the Common Provision Regulation and the European Territorial Cooperation Regulation.
- That the functions of the Certifying Authority (CA) will be carried out by the Managing Authority (MA) in the future programme is not associated with significant problems.
- The administrative bodies continue various reasonable approaches to improve the management of the CE 2020 Programme.
- The evaluation revealed that the human resources are sufficient to fulfil the tasks of the JS.

⁵⁰ The only exceptions are Croatia, which is a new Member State of the CENTRAL EUROPE programme while Ukraine will not be participating in the programme anymore.

Procedures for monitoring the programme and for collecting the data necessary to carry out evaluations

The assessment of procedures for monitoring the programme and for collecting the data necessary to carry out evaluations comprises following evaluation questions:

EQ 45: Are suitable preventive measures foreseen for possible bottlenecks?

EQ 46: Are the foreseen monitoring procedures and time schedules likely to provide for timely collection of the data in order to feed into decision making, reporting, and evaluations?

EQ 47: Are the data sources and the data collection (including check and control of data) defined?

EQ 48: How is the proposed system in relation to the performance of the existing system?

EQ 49: Are adequate procedures in place to ensure the quality of the data? (e.g. a precise definition of the content and source of each indicator)

EQ 50: Are adequate data to conduct an ongoing evaluation (to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact) defined?

EQ 51: Is the evaluation plan adequate?

With regard to the monitoring and collection of data, the data sources and the methods for data collection are defined by the CP CE 2020. A structured survey in combination with a focus group approach will be conducted by a transnational expert panel to collect data needed to monitor result indicators for priority axis 1-4. Data for the programme-specific output indicators will be collected by aggregating the data provided by the progress reports submitted by the operations periodically. Beside this, data for the common output indicators will be collected also through the periodical progress reports as well through the application form.

To ensure the quality of the data a number of aspects such as the measurement unit, the baseline value and baseline year, the target value and source of data as well as the frequency of reporting are described. Clear definitions of the content of each indicator are provided in the Annex 08 of the final CP.

The CE 2007-2013 programme is characterised by a strong result orientation. The CP CE 2020 Programme is further reinforcing a strong result orientation. This will also affect the procedures for monitoring and collecting data. The future system for monitoring operation progress will be based on the principles of content and financial monitoring as already applied in the current programme. In addition, however, it will also integrate improvements and preventive measures designed to reduce administrative burden for the beneficiaries. These measures are related to the implementation of new technological solutions such as online progress report templates which allow multiple user entries, the limitation of the number and complexity of indicators to reduce the complexity of progress reporting, the preparation of a model tool-box to assist operation partners in reporting to the lead partners or the organisation of ad hoc trainings for operation partners on reporting, control and audit.

The specific procedures for monitoring and collecting data (especially for the result indicators) will be specified in an evaluation plan which will be approved by the Monitoring Committee and have not been part of this evaluation. Besides this, an additional document "Concept for establishing result indicator baselines and measuring indicator progress" also clarifies the procedures for monitoring and collecting data.

During the evaluation process the ex-ante evaluator developed various suggestions as well as a set of recommendations targeting at improved monitoring and data collection procedures. The CP in its different draft versions has well progressed and all interim recommendations have satisfactorily been integrated. Further information on the uptake of recommendations during the process can be found in Annex B.

All in all, it can be stated that the procedures for monitoring the programme and for collecting the data necessary to carry out evaluations are adequate:

- With regard to the monitoring and collection of data, the data sources and the methods for data collection have been defined by the final CP CE 2020.
- The CE 2020 Programme ensures the quality of data by description and definition of a number of aspects for each indicator (measurement unit, baseline value and baseline year, target value, source of data, frequency of reporting, definition of the content).
- The system for monitoring operation progress of the CE 2020 Programme will be based on the principles of content and financial monitoring as already applied in the current programme, but will also integrate improvements and preventive measures designed to reduce administrative burden for the operation partners.

Component 3: Consistency of financial allocation

13. Consistency of financial allocations

Legal basis for the ex-ante evaluation of this theme is Article 55 (c) of the CPR, stating the ex-ante evaluation should assess „consistency of the allocation of budgetary resources with the objectives of the programme“.

During the evaluation process the consistency of financial allocations were evaluated and formal recommendations were given.

The following analysis deals with Section 3 and 1.2 of the final CP.

The assessment of the consistency of financial allocations comprises following evaluation questions:

EQ 52: Do the financial allocations concentrate on the most important objectives in line with the identified challenges and needs?

EQ 53: Are the experiences from the current programme incorporated and is feasibility given to reach the targeted direct beneficiaries?

EQ 54: Do the financial allocations comply with the concentration requirements (Art. 16 CPR)?

EQ 55: Is the technical assistance budget sufficient to manage and communicate the programme?

The financial figures are provided in Section 3 of the CP CE 2020, “The Financing Plan of the Cooperation Programme”, which has been duly filled in. The overall programme budget is EUR 298.987.025,44 with an ERDF contribution of EUR 246.581.112,00 as detailed in Section 3 of the CP.

The budget share of the final CP CE 2020 for each priority axis, are as follows:

| Priority Axis | % of the overall budget | Union support total in € |
|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | 28% | 69.042.711,36 |
| 2 | 18% | 44.384.600,16 |
| 3 | 36% | 88.769.200,32 |
| 4 | 12% | 29.589.733,44 |
| 5 | 6% | 14.794.866,72 |

A justification for the varying shares between the different priority axes is provided in Section 1.2 of the CP CE 2020. The justification refers to:

- The estimated financial size of actions foreseen in each priority axis.
- The coherence with the funding priorities as in the EC Country Position Papers.
- The inputs provided by relevant partners within consultations (see section 5.6).
- The experiences of the programming period 2007-2013.

In general, the distribution of shares corresponds well to the programme objectives and is in line with identified challenges and needs.

For priority axis 1 - 4, the shares well reflect the specific features and financial needs to be expected from operations in the different priority axes and also take into account experiences and lessons learnt from the current programme. Furthermore, the “demand” from operation stakeholders, which participated in stakeholder workshops of the programming phase, was taken into account, when defining budget shares – thus ensuring feasibility to reach the targeted direct beneficiaries.

According to Art. 18 of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), Member States shall concentrate support, in accordance with the Fund-specific rules, on actions bringing the greatest added value in relation to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, addressing the challenges identified in the country specific recommendations under Article 121(2) of the Treaty and the relevant Council recommendations adopted under 148(4) of the Treaty, and taking into account national and regional needs. The financial allocations are based on the regional analysis and are in line with the EC country position papers. Thus they fully comply with the CPR.

Regarding priority axis 5 (Technical Assistance) it is important to assess the technical assistance allocation vs. the envisaged activities. The budget share of 6% of the ERDF budget is similar to the budget for Technical Assistance in the previous programming period. However, it includes one more year of programme implementation and eligibility of expenditure compared to the 2007-2013 period. This will presumably result in a reduced purchase power. However, since organizational structure, human resources as well as tasks and activities of the CE 2020 Programme implementation structure are almost identical to the previous programme, the differences are considered as manageable and it is very much likely that this budget will be sufficient to manage and communicate the programme well.

All in all, it can be stated that the financial allocations are consistent:

- The distribution of shares corresponds well to the relevance of programme objectives and is in line with identified challenges and needs:
- For priority axis 1 – 4:
 - shares well reflect the specific features and financial needs to be expected from operations
 - take into account experiences and lessons learnt
 - take into account input from stakeholder workshops, which were part of the programming phase
- The financial allocations are based on the regional analysis and are in line with the EC country position papers. Thus they fully comply with the CPR.
- For priority axis 5 (Technical Assistance), it can be stated that taking into account experiences from the current programme as well as envisaged tasks of the implementation structure, the budget share is sufficient to manage and communicate the programme well.

Component 4: Contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy

14. Contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy

In addition to verifying the consistency of the programme with the Europe 2020 Strategy, the intervention logic and the intended results, the evaluators should assess to what extent the programme is likely to contribute to the Europe Strategy's objectives and targets (according to CPR Art. 55 (a)).

With strong inter-linkages to component 1 – the assessment of the programme strategy; this component of the evaluation synthesises the following:

EQ 56: Does the programme as a whole contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy?

As stated in the ex-ante guidance document, “it may be difficult to capture this contribution due to the tiny share of CSF programmes as compared to the overall national effort (for example in the case of innovation support in a competitive region, or an employment support in regions of a Member State heavily investing in active labour market policies)”. However, the evaluator has carried out some elaborations on the likeliness of contributions to the targets of Europe 2020, as laid down in the Europe 2020 Communication from the Commission and followed on in the National Reform Programmes (NRPs). Following headline targets for the EU territory are stipulated by the strategy and built the framework for the NRPs:

R&D target:

3 % of the EU's GDP to be invested in research and development

Energy/climate targets:

20 % greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions compared to 2005) reduction compared to 1990

20 % of energy consumption from renewables

20 % increase in energy efficiency

Employment/education targets:

75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed

Reducing early school leaving to less than 10 %

At least 40 % of 30-34 year old completing tertiary or equivalent education

Poverty reduction target:

Reducing the number of people in or at risk of poverty or exclusion by at least 20 millions

These targets function as reference values in the NRPs and form the basis for the country-specific recommendations, reflecting the National 2020 targets aimed at by the CE 2020 MSs which are mainly lower than these average values. Regarding the contributions of the CE 2020 Programme to these defined target values defined it is not possible to measure or exactly capture the effects. Anyhow, the intensity of contributions can be described as shown in following table:

CE 2020 Programme Investment Strategy

EUROPE 2020 TARGETS (headlines) / Contributions

X = strong link; x = contribution

| Priority axis TO / IP | Specific objective | Result indicator | R&D | Energy/ climate | Employment/ education | Poverty reduction |
|--------------------------|--|--|-----|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1) TO 1, IP 1b | 1.1 To improve sustainable linkages among actors of the central European innovation systems for strengthening regional innovation capacity in central Europe | Status of linkages among actors of the central European innovation systems achieved through transnational cooperation in central European regions | X | x | x | x |
| 1) TO 1, IP 1b | 1.2 To improve skills and entrepreneurial competences for advancing economic and social innovation in central European regions | Status of capacities of the public and private sectors for skills development of employees and entrepreneurial competences achieved through transnational cooperation driving economic and social innovation in central European regions | X | x | X | x |

CE 2020 Programme Investment Strategy

EUROPE 2020 TARGETS (headlines) / Contributions

X = strong link; x = contribution

| Priority TO / IP | axis | Specific objective | Result indicator | R&D | Energy/ climate | Employment/ education | Poverty reduction |
|------------------|------|--|--|-----|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 2) TO 4, IP 4c | 2.1 | To develop and implement solutions for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy usage in public infrastructures | Status of capacities of the public sector and related entities for increased energy efficiency and renewable energy use in public infrastructures achieved through transnational cooperation | x | X | x | x |
| 2) TO 4, IP 4e | 2.2 | To improve territorially based energy planning strategies and policies supporting climate change mitigation | Status of capacities of the public sector and related entities for territorially based low-carbon energy planning and policies achieved through transnational cooperation | x | X | x | x |

CE 2020 Programme Investment Strategy

EUROPE 2020 TARGETS (headlines) / Contributions

X = strong link; x = contribution

| Priority TO / IP | axis | Specific objective | Result indicator | R&D | Energy/ climate | Employment/ education | Poverty reduction |
|------------------|------|--|---|-----|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 2) TO 4, IP 4e | 2.3 | To improve capacities for mobility planning in functional urban areas to lower CO2 emissions | Status of capacities of the public sector and related entities for low-carbon mobility planning in functional urban areas achieved through transnational cooperation | x | X | x | x |
| 3) TO 6, IP 6c | 3.1 | To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources | Status of integrated environmental management capacities of the public sector and related entities for the sustainable use of natural heritage and resources achieved through transnational cooperation | x | x | x | x |

CE 2020 Programme Investment Strategy

EUROPE 2020 TARGETS (headlines) / Contributions

X = strong link; x = contribution

| Priority axis TO / IP | Specific objective | Result indicator | R&D | Energy/ climate | Employment/ education | Poverty reduction |
|--------------------------|---|--|-----|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 3) TO 6, IP 6c | 3.2 To improve capacities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources regional actors for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources | Status of capacities of the public sector and related entities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources achieved through transnational cooperation | x | x | x | x |
| 3) TO 6, IP 6e | 3.3 To improve environmental management of functional urban areas to make them more liveable places | Status of integrated environmental management capacities of the public sector and related entities in functional urban areas achieved through transnational cooperation for making them more liveable places | x | x | x | x |

CE 2020 Programme Investment Strategy

EUROPE 2020 TARGETS (headlines) / Contributions

X = strong link; x = contribution

| Priority TO / IP | axis | Specific objective | Result indicator | R&D | Energy/ climate | Employment/ education | Poverty reduction |
|------------------|------|---|--|-----|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 4) TO 7, IP 7b | 4.1 | To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks | Status of coordinated planning capacities of the public sector and related entities for regional passenger transport systems linked to national and European transport networks achieved through transnational cooperation | x | X | x | x |
| 4) TO 7, IP 7c | 4.2 | To improve coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environment friendly freight solutions | Status of coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environment friendly freight solutions achieved through transnational cooperation | x | X | x | x |

Based on this cross-reference analysis of the CE 2020 Programme Investment Strategy with links and likely contributions to the Europe 2020 targets, the following conclusions can be drawn:

The CE 2020 Programme will have stronger contributions to the dimensions smart and sustainable growth (rather than to the inclusive dimension). References to R&D and the energy/climate change targets appear strongest, but due to the integrated and catalytic character of the TNC programmes also effects on the employment/education as well as poverty targets can be expected.

Also referring to the technical specification of the programme's goal as presented in the final CP (p. 10) – “Transnational cooperation in central Europe is the catalyst for implementing smart solutions answering to regional challenges in the fields of innovation, low carbon economy, environment, culture and transport. It builds regional capacities following an integrated bottom-up approach involving and coordinating relevant actors from all governance levels” – thus, it can be stated that the CE 2020 Programme successfully addresses the challenges and needs of the programme area and will contribute to Europe 2020 in accordance with the possibilities, mechanism and effectiveness of a TNC programme.

Component 5: Strategic environmental assessment

15. Results of the SEA

According to the SEA Directive EU/2001/42 a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was implemented as part of the programming procedure of the CP CE 2020⁵¹. The SEA aimed to assess the potential effects of the CP CE 2020 on the environment. The CP CE 2020 draft version 3.2 (November 2013) formed the basis for the assessment of possible effects on the environment resulting from the implementation of this programme⁵². The implementation of the SEA during the preparation of the programme ensured directly the integration of environmental considerations into the CP CE 2020 on basis of the feedback gathered within the consultations process in the CE 2020 programme area.

Methodology of assessment

The environmental report sets out briefly the scope and methods of assessment of the SEA conducted within programming procedure of the CP CE 2020.

Furthermore, the environmental report elaborates on the current environmental state (including existing environmental problems) of the CE programme area on basis of the selected environmental issues and cross-cutting themes. In addition, the likely evolution of the current environmental state without the implementation of the programme ('zero-option') is demonstrated. The zero-option scenario was used as a basis to compare the possible environmental effects resulting from the implementation of the CE 2020 programme.

The environmental policy framework at the international and EU level which is relevant for the assessment is pointed out within the environmental report.

The methodological approach to assessing the environmental effects of the CP CE 2020 was supported by the identified guiding questions. These guiding questions were predominantly derived from environmental protection objectives which are based on different environmental policies existent at both the EU and international. The possible environmental effects of the CP CE 2020 were considered for each environmental issue and cross-cutting theme. For the environmental assessment the most detailed level of programme information was used. Thus, the assessment of likely effects resulting from the CP CE 2020 was conducted at the level of the priority axes, their corresponding specific objectives and potential transnational actions. Furthermore, it should be noted that the assessment was primarily based on a qualitative approach.

With regard to reasonable alternatives, recommendations and suggestions resulting from the environmental assessment have been provided in a discursive process in order to amend the CP CE 2020. These recommendations and suggestions have been considered in the CE programming process.

⁵¹ As an output of the SEA process within the programming procedure of the CP CE 2020 an environmental report has been set up.

⁵² The CP version 3.2 was already an advanced version with full strategy and intervention logic. Accordingly, consultations on a solid basis were ensured.

Possible environmental effects of the CP CE 2020 Programme

The assessment at the programme level can only provide a general outline of possible environmental effects. This is due to the fact that more detailed information on the likely environmental effects will occur at the implementation phase of the operations. Moreover, due to the fact that the CP CE 2020 is an ETC programme it must be considered that its key focus is on the promotion of “soft factors” such as the building and increasing of capacities including exchange of knowledge and good practice between the participating Member States. Thus, the possible environmental effects of the CP CE 2020 are primarily of indirect nature. Nevertheless, the promotion of “soft factors” forms the basis for further investment activities. A short description of the main environmental effects on each priority axis identified within the environmental assessment:

Priority axis 1: Building and increasing capacities and know-how in the innovation sector will likely have no significant effect on the environment. Amongst other issues, however, the build-up of skills and competences in the field of eco- and social innovation as well of low-carbon solutions could affect almost all environmental issues in a positive way.

Priority axis 2: Building and increasing capacities for low carbon strategies in different fields such as improved energy efficiency in public infrastructure, strengthened use of renewable energy resources or enhanced low-carbon mobility will contribute to a reduction of emissions (CO₂, GHG) and thus to climate change mitigation. This has in particular a positive effect on the environmental issues “Air and Climate” but also for “Population and Human Health” and “Flora, Fauna and Biodiversity”. With regard to the usage of renewable energy resources single possible negative effects could possibly occur on several environmental issues. For example, the promotion and subsequent construction of hydropower plants could have an adverse effect on the river eco-system or the enhanced use of renewable energy resources such as wind energy plants could lead to adverse modifications of the characteristic natural and cultural landscape.

Priority axis 3: Building and increasing capacities for the improvement of the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources will likely have a possible positive effect on all environmental issues. The promotion of integrated (environmental) approaches with focus on sustainable use will likely contribute to a reduction of external pressures and usage conflicts and thus contributes to protect the natural and cultural resources.

Priority axis 4: Building and increasing capacities for the improvement of transports systems with focus on the promotion of regional public transport and multimodal environment-friendly freight solutions will likely have possible positive effects in particular on “Air and Climate” as well as an “Population and Human Health”. Due to this focus possible environmental effects will likely not occur for most of the other environmental issues. However, with regard to the environmental issue water, it has to be considered that the promotion of this transport mode could contribute to increased water pollution as well as to adverse effects on hydromorphology.

With regard to the mentioned possible negative effects, obligatory recommendations were provided in the environmental report in order to ensure that the CP CE 2020 will not affect the environment in a negative way. These recommendations were taken up and integrated in the CP CE 2020. Thus, as consequence, the implementation of the CE programme should have positive effects on the environment and possible negative effects are being avoided.

This figure provides an overview of the possible effects on the environmental issues resulting from the CP CE 2020.

| | Environmental issues | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|------|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Water | Soil | Air and Climate | Population and Human Health | Fauna, Flora and Bio-diversity | Cultural Heritage and Landscap |
| Priority axis 1: Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive | | | | | | |
| Specific objective 1.1 To improve sustainable linkages among actors of the central European innovation systems for strengthening regional innovation capacity | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| Specific objective 1.2 To improve knowledge and skills for advancing economic and social innovation in central European regions | o/+ | o/+ | o/+ | o/+ | o/+ | o |
| Priority axis 2: Cooperating on low-carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE | | | | | | |
| Specific objective 2.1 To develop and implement solutions for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy usage in public infrastructure | o | o | + | o/+ | o/+ | o |
| Specific objective 2.2 To improve territorially based energy planning strategies and policies supporting climate change mitigation | o/- | o/+ | + | o/+ | o/+/- | o/- |
| Specific objective 2.3 To improve capacities for mobility planning in functional urban areas to lower CO2 emissions | o | o | + | o/+ | o/+ | o |
| Priority axis 3: Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE | | | | | | |
| Specific objective 3.1 To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources | + | + | + | o/+ | + | + |
| Specific objective 3.2 To improve capacities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources | o | o | o | o/+ | o | + |
| Specific objective 3.3 To improve environmental management of functional urban areas to make them more liveable places | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Priority axis 4: Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE | | | | | | |
| Specific objective 4.1 To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks | o | o | + | o/+ | o | o |
| Specific objective 4.2 To improve coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environment-friendly freight solutions | o/- | o | + | o/+ | o | o |

Legend for the assessment

| | |
|-----|---|
| + | Possible occurrence of positive environmental effects |
| - | Possible occurrence of negative environmental effects |
| +/- | Possible occurrence of both positive and negative environmental effects |
| o | Likely no significant environmental effects |
| / | Assessment is not possible due to the limited availability of information |

SEA consultation process within the CP CE 2020

The SEA Directive EU/2001/42 requires that the environmental authorities as well as the public of each Member State have to be consulted within the SEA. The consultation process was carried out within two main steps.

Step 1

According to Article 5 (4) of the SEA Directive the environmental authorities of the participating Member States were invited to review the draft scoping report and to express their professional opinion on the document. The consultation took place from the 17th of April until the 17th of May 2013. The feedback given by the environmental authorities was integrated into the final scoping report.

Step 2

As laid down in the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC (Article 6) the national environmental authorities and the public of the CE Programme area were consulted and invited to provide their feedback on the CP CE 2020 (version 3.2) and the draft environmental report (status 02.12.2013). The consultation process took place six weeks (from 5/2013 to 3/2014). In some participating Member States extended national consultation periods occurred eight weeks (from 5/2013 to 5/2014) in compliance with national legislation. At transnational level the required consultation documents have been published on the CE Programme's website by the MA/JTS. At national level the Member States participating in the CE 2020 Programme were responsible to conduct the consultation process by taking into consideration the national specific requirements. A total of 41 organisations from different countries - mostly from Member States of the CE 2020 Programme - took part in the SEA consultation process.

The received feedback from the environmental authorities and the public related to different topics within the draft environmental report and within the CP CE 2020 (version 3.2). In terms of the draft environmental report the comments referred for example to specific aspects within the description of the current environmental situation. Further comments pointed out to add further environmental legislations in the corresponding chapter of the report. The feedback relating to the CP CE 2020 addressed, among other issues, specific aspects (e.g. ecological restoration of degraded ecosystems or adaption measures, disaster management and rescue systems) and their integration within the description of the relevant specific objectives and corresponding actions. Moreover, single comments dealt with the project selection criteria or pointed out to consider previous experiences and lessons learned of the CE 2007-2013 in the CP CE 2020. In addition some comments had no direct reference point to the environmental report or to the CP CE 2020. These comments for example included a general assessment and no suggestion of improvement or were not a SEA-related issue. The SEA experts assessed the comments gathered in the framework of the consultation whether the comments were relevant or not relevant for the environmental report or for the CP CE 2020. A comment was generally considered relevant if it related directly to the draft environmental report or the CP CE 2020 and if it contributed to improve the quality of these documents due to its competent specialist input. In terms of the CP CE 2020, a comment was considered relevant as well if it contributed to enhance the CP CE 2020 regarding its environmental performance.

The comments which were considered relevant for the environmental report were integrated completely into the environmental report by the SEA experts. The comments which were considered relevant for CP CE 2020 were taken into account in the preparation of the programme by the MA/JTS (supported by the SEA experts). With regard to this, it can be stated that all these comments were integrated into the CP CE 2020. Thus, the specific environmental aspects such as ecological restoration of degraded ecosystems and water has been integrated within the description of specific objective 3.1 and the corresponding actions.

Furthermore, the issue air pollution including nitric oxides emissions has been integrated in the relevant text passages of specific objective 2.2. Annex C of the environmental report provides an overview showing the received comments as well as their assessment and how they were integrated into the CP CE 2020. In summary it can be noted that all comments which were considered relevant for the CP CE 2020 have been fully and satisfactorily integrated into the CP CE 2020 by the MA/JTS.

Monitoring measures

According to Article 10 of the SEA Directive EU/2001/42, possible significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Cooperation Programme CE 2020, identified within the existing environmental assessment, are to be monitored in order to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.

Thus, monitoring measures must form part of and be implemented within the CP CE 2020. The recommended monitoring measures in the environmental report have been well integrated into the CP CE 2020. At the programme level, the monitoring of environmental effects is incorporated into the monitoring framework of the programme. At the operation level, within the quality assessment of the applications possible effects on the environment will be considered as a horizontal issue taking into consideration also the results of the environmental assessment. Furthermore, the applicants have to describe within the application forms which possible environmental effects the operation will likely have. During the implementation of the operations monitoring measures are also foreseen.

Main Results

To summarise, the implementation of operations within the specific objectives of the CP CE 2020 will likely have positive impacts on the selected environmental issues and cross-cutting themes. Possible negative effects can be excluded due to the provided recommendations and monitoring measures which were taken up and integrated in the CP CE 2020. As laid down in the SEA Directive the national environmental authorities and the public have been adequately involved in the SEA process. They were consulted and invited to provide their feedback on the draft scoping report as well as on the draft CP CE 2020 and the draft environmental report. A reasonable monitoring system is foreseen to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.

List of abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|--|
| AF | Application Form |
| CBC | Cross-Border Cooperation |
| CA | Certifying Authority |
| CE | CENTRAL EUROPE |
| CE 2020 | CENTRAL EUROPE Programme 2014-2020 |
| C+N | Challenges and needs (only used in tables) |
| CBC | Cross-border cooperation |
| CP | Cooperation Programme |
| CPR | Common Provision Regulation |
| CSF | Common Strategic Framework |
| EIB | European Investment Bank |
| ENI | European Neighbourhood Instrument |
| ESI | European Structural and Investment Funds |
| ETC | European Territorial Cooperation |
| Europe 2020 | Ten-year growth strategy of the European Union |
| EUSDR | EU Strategy for the Danube Region |
| EQ | Evaluation question |
| ER | Evaluation report |
| FLC | First Level Control |
| GDP | Gross domestic product |
| GHG | Greenhouse gas |
| ICT | Information and communication technology |
| IP | Investment priority |
| IPA | Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance |
| JS | Joint Secretariat |
| LP | Lead Partner |
| MA | Managing Authority |
| MRS | Macro-regional strategy |
| MS | Member State |
| NCP | Network of Contact Point |
| MC | Monitoring Committee |
| NRP | National Reform Programme |
| PA | Partnership Agreements |
| PM | Operation management |
| PMS | Programme monitoring system |
| PP | Operation Partner |

| | |
|-----|--|
| RES | Renewable energy sources |
| RIS | Regional innovation strategy |
| SEA | Strategic Environmental assessment |
| SG | Steering Group for the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme 2020 |
| SME | Small and medium sized enterprise |
| SO | Specific objective |
| TA | Technical Assistance |
| TN | Transnational e.g. TN operations |
| TNC | Transnational cooperation |
| TO | Thematic objective |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |

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Annex

- Annex A Evaluation questions of the ex-ante evaluation CE 2020
- Annex B Recommendation tracker
- Annex C Interviews – Interviewees and schedule

Annex A: Evaluation questions of the ex-ante evaluation CE 2020

| Component 1 | Programme Strategy |
|--|---|
| 1.1 Consistency | |
| 1.1.1 Europe 2020 challenges and needs / CSF | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are the chosen programme objectives in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy? 2. Do the proposed thematic objectives, priorities and corresponding objectives comply with the CSF? |
| 1.1.2 Consistency of objectives with challenges and needs | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Are the challenges and needs as in the CP justified? 4. Is the choice of thematic priorities and investment priorities justified? 5. Do the objectives precisely demonstrate how the programme contributes to the challenges and needs in the programme area? 6. Is a justification given for non-inclusion of major challenges and needs? 7. Have the key territorial challenges for urban, rural, coastal and fisheries areas as well as for areas with particular territorial features have been analysed and taken into account in the strategy? |
| 1.2 Coherence | |
| 1.2.1. Internal Coherence | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Are the selected thematic objectives and investment priorities covered by corresponding specific objectives and do all specific objectives contribute to the programme strategy? 9. Do the specific objectives of the single priority axes show a thematic compliance or can antagonistic effects be identified? 10. Do the specific objectives of different priority axes show a thematic compliance or can antagonistic effects be identified? |
| 1.2.2. Relation with other relevant instruments | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Are there potential overlaps or synergies with other funding instruments? 12. Does the programme support integrated territorial approaches appropriate to achieve the thematic priorities? 13. Are regional, local and urban development initiatives seen as an endorsing part of the programmes activities? 14. Does the programme create synergies with other activities which would not have occurred without EU assistance? |
| 1.3 Linkages between supported actions, expected outputs and results (intervention logic) | |
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Can clear causal links between different actions, planned outputs and the intended results be established? 16. Have external factors which may influence the results have been taken into account? 17. Is the change that the programme intends to bring achievable through the operations delivering the outputs? |

| Component 1 | Programme Strategy |
|--|--|
| | <p>18. Is the rationale for the form of support proposed assessed as reasonable?</p> <p>19. Do the outputs contribute to expected results?</p> <p>20. Is the proposed support relevant in a transnational cooperation context?</p> <p>21. Are the assumptions backed by evidence (previous experience, evaluations or studies)?</p> <p>22. Are the actions proposed likely to contribute to the envisaged outputs and results?</p> |
| 1.4 Horizontal principles | |
| <p>1.4.1 Measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women instruments</p> | <p>23. Does the strategy ensure equal opportunities between man and women?</p> <p>24. Are the planned measures to prevent discrimination adequate?</p> |
| <p>1.4.2 Measures to promote sustainable development</p> | <p>25. Does the programme address how it will meet the environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management in the selection of operations?</p> <p>26. Are the planned measures to promote sustainable development adequate?</p> |
| Component 2 | Indicators, monitoring and evaluation |
| 2.1 Relevance and clarity of the chosen programme indicators | |
| <p>2.1.1 Relevance of the chosen programme indicators</p> | <p>27. Are the programme-specific result indicators responsive to the policy?</p> <p>28. a) Do the programme-specific result indicators cover (one of) the most important intended change? b) Are the programme-specific output indicators relevant to the actions to be supported?</p> <p>29. Are the common output indicators used where relevant to the content of the investment priorities and specific objectives?</p> |
| <p>2.1.2 Clarity of the chosen programme indicators</p> | <p>30. Do the programme-specific indicators have a clear title, an unequivocal and easy to understand definition?</p> <p>31. Are the programme-specific result indicators robust against outliers or extreme values?</p> <p>32. Do the programme-specific result indicators have publicly available data sources for the choice of baselines, target values and definitions of the indicator?</p> |

2.2 Feasibility of the choice of the quantified baselines and target values

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| | 33. Do baselines for the programme-specific result indicators exist? |
| | 34. Are the quantified/qualitative target values of the indicators realistic? |
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2.3 Suitability of the chosen milestones

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| | 35. Are the milestones suitable which were selected for the performance framework? |
| | 36. Are the chosen milestones adequately reflecting the nature and complexity of the programme? |
| | 37. Are the chosen milestones realistic in relation to the timing of the reviews? |
| | 38. Are indicators selected for the chosen milestones in each priority axis? |
| | 39. Have all indicators of the milestones quantitative/qualitative target values? |
| | 40. Will the data be available for the milestones at the key review points? |
| | 41. Can the milestones be achieved within the given timeframe? Do the thematic objectives, priorities and corresponding objectives comply with the CSF? |
-

2.4 Suitability of the chosen administrative capacity, data collection procedures and evaluation

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2.4.1. Human resources and administrative capacity for management of the programme | 42. Is the implementation structure adequate in relation to the size and complexity of the programme? |
| | 43. Is the human resources and administrative capacity adequate for the management of the programme? |
| | 44. Has the implementation structure and the human resources and administrative capacity a positive benchmark in relation to the current structure? |
| 2.4.2 Procedures for monitoring the programme and for collecting the data necessary to carry out evaluations | 45. Are suitable preventive measures foreseen for possible bottlenecks? |
| | 46. Are the foreseen monitoring procedures and time schedules likely to provide for timely collection of the data in order to feed into decision making, reporting, and evaluations? |
| | 47. Are the data sources and the data collection (including check and control of data) defined? |
| | 48. How is the proposed system in relation to the performance of the existing system? |
| | 49. Are adequate procedures in place to ensure the quality of the data? (e.g. a precise definition of the content and source of each indicator) |
| | 50. Are adequate data to conduct an ongoing evaluation (to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact) defined? |
| | 51. Is the evaluation plan adequate? |
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| Component 3 | Consistency of financial allocations |
|--------------------|---|

3 Consistency of financial allocations

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| | <p>52. Do the financial allocations concentrate on the most important objectives in line with the identified challenges and needs?</p> <p>53. Are the experiences from the current programme incorporated and is feasibility given to reach the targeted direct beneficiaries?</p> <p>54. Do the financial allocations comply with the concentration requirements (Art. 16 CPR)?</p> <p>55. Is the technical assistance budget sufficient to manage and communicate the programme?</p> |
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| Component 4 | Contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy |
|--------------------|---|

4 Contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy

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| | <p>56. Does the programme as a whole contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy?</p> |
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Annex B: Recommendation tracker

The following table is the synthesis of the recommendations given by the ex-ante evaluator in the course of the evaluation. It reflects the integration of the evaluator's recommendations into the final CP.

Component 1: Programme strategy

REFERENCES TO THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 1.0 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-----------|--|--|
| ER1/EQ1-1 | It is recommended to extend the references to the "Agenda for new skills and jobs" beyond priority axis 1 and 3 and to further emphasise the contributions of the CE 2020 Programme to this flagship initiative at horizontal level. | ✓ Chapter 1.1.4 now comprises the description of all plausible contributions to the different flagship initiatives of Europe 2020, including the extended reference to the Agenda for new skills and jobs" (in priority axes 1, 2 and 3). |

LINKAGES TO THE CSF THEMATIC OBJECTIVES

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 1.0 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-----------|---|--|
| ER1/EQ2-1 | Revise the information provided on "linking the challenges and needs to the CSF Thematic Objectives" by consequently following the "correct direction" of the analytical elaborations – from challenges and needs in central Europe to the choice of TOs and not vice versa. Hence, figure 1 (p. 37) should be reversed and explained accordingly. | ✓ With the comprehensive revision of the chapter 1 and 2 of the CP the references to the CSF as well as the illustration of strategic choices has significantly improved. The CP now contains less analytical elaborations but a very clear focus on providing the essential information. |
| ER1/EQ2-2 | Streamline the presentation of the strategy by dropping the concept of the "potentials and barriers" in the context of the strategy derivation, since its relevance for the thematic focus of CE 2020 is not traceable. This applies especially for the "linkages" displayed in figure 3 (p. 51). Instead, the CP should consequently refer to the identified challenges and needs. | ✓ As recommended the concept of "potentials and barriers" was dropped. The derivation of the strategy is now clearly built on the identified challenges and needs. |

REGIONAL ANALYSIS – IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 1.0 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-----------|--|---|
| ER1/EQ3-1 | In order to provide a fully homogenous structure of the regional analysis, it is recommended to revise the title of chapter 2.1.2.7 ⁵³ into “Governance structures”. | ✓ The title of the chapter was changed accordingly (“1.1.2. Analysis of the situation of the programme area – Governance structures”) |
| ER1/EQ3-2 | Since the title of chapter 2.1.2.6 ⁵⁴ is not fully in line with the resp. contents provided, it is recommended to change it accordingly e.g. into “Natural and cultural resources” | ✓ The title of the chapter was changed accordingly (“1.1.2. Analysis of the situation of the programme area – Natural and cultural resources”) |
| ER1/EQ3-3 | Further elaborations are recommended on the challenges and needs concerning SMEs and SME policies in central Europe and their relevance for TNC. Relevant needs and challenges should be further integrated and addressed accordingly in the CP. | ✓ The challenges and needs with regard to SMEs are now further reflected (e.g. in chapter 1.1.2 under “Globalisation and economic development” as well as in the SWOT analysis). |
| ER1/EQ3-4 | In case Croatia will join the CE 2020 Programme, the policy needs of HR and the missing information (as highlighted in CP 1.0) should be included. | ✓ Information on the new MS Croatia has been added in all relevant parts. |

JUSTIFICATION OF THE SELECTED THEMATIC OBJECTIVES AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 1.0 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-----------|---|--|
| ER1/EQ4-1 | Revise the justification for the selection of TOs and IPs (table 4) by eliminating all merely abstract references to the SWOT analysis (i.e. “helps to strengthen internal strengths of CE”) by clear references to the related challenges and needs. | ✓ This recommendation has been integrated, since chapter 1.1.5 of the final CP now provides a thoroughly revised version of the “Justification for the choice of thematic objectives” (including IPs) with precise references to the aspects elaborated in the SWOT analysis. |

⁵³ With the updates of the provided ETC CP model during the process the numbering of the chapters has been changed (regional analysis formerly addressed in chapter 2).

⁵⁴ See comment above.

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 1.0 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-----------|---|--|
| ER1/EQ4-2 | Revise the justification for the selection of TOs and IPs by further considering the relevance of spatial references in the context of TNC. | ✓ Additional spatial references were inserted in the CP in particular by revising the SWOT analysis accordingly and taking into account challenges and potentials for territorial development as defined in the Territorial Agenda 2020: Towards (CP 4.0, p. 12-13) |

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHALLENGES AND NEEDS IN THE PROGRAMME AREA

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 1.0 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-----------|---|--|
| ER1/EQ5-1 | In order to avoid any misunderstandings and to demonstrate more clearly the contributions of CE 2020, it is recommend to revise the title of priority axis 3 avoiding the term “heritage”; the evaluator suggests “Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for green growth in CENTRAL EUROPE” (alternatively the term “assets” could be used). | ✓ This recommendation has been followed; the term “heritage” was replaced by “resources”. |

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES TO THE PROGRAMME STRATEGY

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 2.1.2 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-----------|--|--|
| ER2/EQ8-1 | Re-formulate the specific objectives 1.1 and 1.2 in order to provide priority axis 1 with a more coherent structure by further relating to the specific achievements envisaged by the CE 2020 Programme (cf. Chapter 3). | ✓ With the reformulation of specific objective 1.1 and 1.2 the requirements for a coherent and distinctive structure are now met. |

COMPLEMENTARITIES AND DELINEATION BETWEEN THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 2.1.2 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-----------|---|---|
| ER2/EQ9-1 | It is recommended to further work out distinction and complementarity between SO 2.2 and SO 2.3 in order to provide a clearer picture what type of activities are supported under SO 2.2 (integrated strategies for both energy production and usage), cp. Chapter 3. | ✓ With the focus on “territorially based low carbon energy planning strategies and policies” under SO 2.2 a clear distinction to SO 2.3 is given and the specific “niche” for the CE 2020 Programme found. |

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 3.2 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|------------|---|---|
| ER3/EQ12-1 | Priority axis 1: Clarify in Section 4 how the programme will approach and alleviate the identified territorial challenges (uneven distribution, brain drain, etc.). | ✓ The information was revised according to the recommendation given by the evaluator. Further explanation is provided how the programme will approach the identified challenges (in particular “by supporting the internationalisation of innovation networks and clusters and by counteracting to brain drain and social exclusion”). |
| ER3/EQ12-2 | Priority axis 2: Accentuate the territorial linkages of the intervention logic in section 4 (e.g. regional energy planning, need for transfer of competence). Moreover, the fact that the programme links two different sectors (energy & transport) in an integrated approach could be stronger underlined in Section 4. | ✓ The information was revised according to the recommendation given by the evaluator, by mentioning “The programme priority tackles these issues through an integrated approach combining the energy and transport sectors.” |
| ER3/EQ12-3 | Priority axis 3: The fact that the programme seeks to support integrated approaches to environmental management should be more pronounced in Section 4. | ✓ The information was revised according to the recommendation given by the evaluator (further reference to “integrated management approaches”) |
| ER3/EQ12-4 | Priority axis 4: The territorial dimension | ✓ |

of this axis should be stronger highlighted in Section 4, in particular the focus on peripheral areas. The information was revised according to the recommendation given by the evaluator (e.g. “within regions and across borders”, “by better connecting peripheral regions”).

INTERVENTION LOGIC

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 2.1.2 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|------------|---|--|
| ER2/EQ15-1 | It can be recapped that the intervention logic of CP draft 2.1.2 already reflects a quite mature system of causal links between its different elements. Anyhow, it is recommended to (partly significantly) improve the causal links by providing a completely coherent and logical structure along the chain of the different elements of the intervention logic. In particular, all results should be formulated in a precise, distinctive and clearly understandable way. Therefore, it is recommended to avoid any paraphrasing between the different levels of the intervention logic (e.g. also not describing results as repetition/ mere re-formulation of SO) and to always use a specific and explicit wording. | ✓ With regard to the revised intervention logic presented in the final CP, it can be stated that the system of linkages between objectives, results, outputs and actions now provides a completely coherent and logical structure. The different levels are clearly distinguished. |
| ER2/EQ17-1 | All specific objectives have been derived from respective IPs in order to describe the changes the CE 2020 Programme intends to achieve in the programme area. Following up the findings under EQ 8 and EQ 9 (already identified needs for revision of SOs of priority axes 1 and 2), the analysis of the intervention logic has revealed potentials for further improvements in the lay-out and/or formulation of the specific objectives (also of priority axis 3). It is recommended to revise the specific objectives by using a distinctive and precise wording in order to clearly describe the specific achievements CE 2020 is aiming at. | ✓ Building up on the assessment of the SO in context of the internal coherence of the programme, the evaluator appraises the revised specific objectives of the CE 2020 (as presented in the final CP) as sufficiently specific and distinctive in order to illustrate the achievements envisaged by the programme. |
| ER2/EQ20-1 | The ex-ante evaluator acknowledges that | ✓ |

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 2.1.2 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|------------|---|---|
| | <p>the transnational cooperation context has already been well considered while setting up the intervention logic for CE 2020. Anyhow, it is recommended to further consider the “specific niche” for transnational cooperation in a pertinent way for the four thematic fields (of the priority axes) and to (partly) revise the elements of the intervention logic accordingly.</p> | <p>With the comprehensive revision of the information provided in Section 2A, especially the information now provided on the types and examples of actions, the target groups addressed, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries, the context and “niche” of transnational cooperation is sufficiently considered.</p> |
| ER2/EQ22-1 | <p>The descriptions of actions should be further streamlined with regards to scope/level of detail in order to ease readability and orientation for potential operation applications. Therefore, the mere term “actions” should be further specified in the descriptions in order to clearly line out, which kind of actions the programme aims at, also – if necessary – with a clearer description of target groups. All descriptions of actions should provide clear distinction and comprehensibility. Last redundancies should be abolished.</p> | <p>✓</p> <p>With the revised information on the examples of actions especially the further precisions undertaken, the requirements pointed out by the evaluator are now fully met.</p> |

Component 2: Indicators, monitoring and evaluation

TITLE OF THE PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC RESULT INDICATORS

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 3.2 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-------------|---|--|
| ER3/EQ 30-1 | In order to ensure a common understanding of the words “linkages”, “capacities”, “regional actors” and “innovation systems”, it is recommended that a definition of these terms is provided in the CP CE 2020. If existent, this could, for example, be done as part of a glossary. | ✓ A definition for each of these key words terms is provided in the “Glossary” in Annex 02 of the final CP. Thus, it can be stated that the recommendation has been fully considered. |
| ER3/EQ 30-2 | In order to provide a clear title of the result indicator for the specific objective 4.1, it is recommended that two indicators are created to address the aspects “planning capacities” and “coordination” separately or that the existing indicator focus on only one of these aspects. If the first option is selected, the ex-ante evaluators point out that the DG Regio recommends that, if possible, only one programme specific indicator is assigned to each investment priority and corresponding specific objective. ⁵⁵ | ✓ The title of the indicator has been adapted focussing now only on one aspect (“coordinated planning capacities”). Thus, it can be stated that the recommendation has been fully considered. |

TITLE OF THE PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC OUTPUT INDICATORS

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 3.2 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-------------|--|---|
| ER3/EQ 30-3 | It is recommended that the term “multimodal” is integrated into the output indicator 7c.2. | ✓ The term “multimodal” has been integrated into the title of the output indicator 7c.2. Thus, it can be stated that the recommendation has been fully considered. |

⁵⁵ cp. COM (2013): MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY – Guidance Document on Ex-ante Evaluation, p. 11

HUMAN RESSOURCES AND ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY FOR MANAGEMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 3.2 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| ER3/EQ 42 – EQ 44 (1) | <p>The ex-ante evaluators recommend that the control measures of the MA commence in the early stages of implementing the new programme when first operations have started. This recommendation applies to both decentralised and centralised national control systems. Whereas it provides centralised national control systems with the opportunity to avoid “systematic failures” at the onset of the programme, it allows decentralised systems to ensure for the equal quality of the different controllers.</p> | <p>✓</p> <p>This recommendation refers to the concrete implementation of control measures of the MA. Based on statements of the MA to implement control measures as recommended, it can be stated that the recommendation has been fully considered.</p> |
| ER3/EQ 42 – EQ 44 (2) | <p>The role and tasks of the contact points should be clearly defined. A set of common tasks all contact points can fulfil should be defined and agreed upon by all Member States.</p> | <p>✓</p> <p>Since a detailed list of tasks will be provided in the programme implementation documents, it can be stated that the recommendation has been fully considered.</p> |
| ER3/EQ 42 – EQ 44 (3) | <p>Operation assessment and selection - Horizontal quality requirements:</p> <p>With regard to the horizontal quality criteria the programme should consider integrating the “quality of the communication plan of operations” as an additional criterion.</p> | <p>✓</p> <p>Since “Sound operation communication strategy and tools” has been integrated into the horizontal quality requirements, it can be stated that the recommendation has been fully considered</p> |

**PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING THE PROGRAMME AND FOR COLLECTING DATA
NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT EVALUATIONS**

| No. | RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING CP DRAFT 3.2 | UPTAKE OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-----------|---|---|
| ER3/EQ 49 | <p>The ex-ante evaluators recommend that the programme develops clear definitions of the content of each indicator. This definition should be practically orientated and aim to simplify the reporting of indicators and to reduce reporting errors. These definitions could, for example, be specified in the manual of the programme.</p> | <p>✓</p> <p>Since clear definitions of the indicators will be included in the call specific application manuals as well as in the programme implementation documents, it can be stated that the recommendation has been fully considered.</p> |

Annex C: Interviews - Interviewees and schedule

Explorative interviews – interviewees and schedule

| Title, Name | Organisation/Position | Country | Interview date | Role |
|----------------------|--|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Deimel, Alexandra | Federal Chancellery - Division IV/4 | Austria | 20.03.2013 | Steering group member |
| Matouskova, Kamila | Ministry for Regional Development | Czech Republic | 15.03.2013 | Steering group member |
| Dr. Görmar, Wilfried | Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development within the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning | Germany | 15.03.2013 | Steering group member |
| Csalagovits, Imre | Office of National Economic Planning | Hungary | 13.03.2013 | Steering group member |
| Rusca, Rosella | Ministry of Economic Development; Development and Cohesion Policy Department | Italy | 14.03.2013 | Steering group member |
| Marcinów, Teresa | Ministry of Regional Development | Poland | 12.03.2013 | Steering group member |
| Trenčanská, Jarmila | The Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic | Slovakia | 14.03.2013 | Steering group member |
| Kobe, Nadja | Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning | Slovenia | 11.03.2013 | Steering group member |
| Krešimir Ivančić | Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds | Croatia | 16.04.2013 | Steering group member |

Thematic interviews – interviewees and schedule

| Title, Name | Organisation/Position | Country | Interview date | Relevant Priority |
|---------------------|--|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Püchner, Petra | Steinbeis-Europa Zentrum, Stuttgart Director | Germany | 29.07.2013 | 1 |
| Priedl, Irma | Regional Government of Lower Austria | Austria | 25.07.2013 | 1 |
| Kubalik, Jan | Czech DEX | Czech Republic | 25.07.2013 | 1 |
| Szabó, Györgi | Ministry of National Economy | Hungary | 22.08.2013 | 1 |
| Molinari, Francesco | External Expert | Italy | 06.08.2013 | 1 |
| Książek, Elżbieta | Poznan Science and Technology Park | Poland | 01.08.2013 | 1 |

| Title, Name | Organisation/Position | Country | Interview date | Relevant Priority |
|----------------------------------|--|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Balog, Miroslav | Slovenská inovačná a energetická agentúra/ Slovak innovation and energy agency | Slovakia | 29.07.2013 | 1 |
| Zalaznik, Alenka Mubi | SPIRIT, Slovenian Technology Agency | Slovenia | 26.07.2013 | 1 |
| Basarac, Goran | Ministry of Economy | Croatia | 13.08.2013 | 1 |
| Sambale, Martin | Energie- und Umweltzentrum Allgäu | Germany | 13.08.2013 | 2 |
| Schneemann, Thomas ⁵⁶ | Technologieoffensive Burgenland | Austria | 30.07.2013 | 2 |
| Tluka, Petr | CZ Biom | Czech Republic | 30.07.2013 | 2 |
| Boda, Krisóf | Ministry of National Development | Hungary | 12.08.2013 | 2 |
| Bertolini, Mauro ⁵⁷ | Piedmont Region – Department for Innovation, Research, University, Energetic Sustainable development | Italy | 13.08.2013 | 2 |
| Jedrysik, Eugeniusz | Central Mining Institute | Poland | 26.07.2013 | 2 |
| Koločány, František | Úrad vlády SR / Government office of the SR | Slovakia | 07.08.2013 | 2 |
| Šolinc, Hinko | Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning | Slovenia | 29.07.2013 | 2 |
| Pintaric, Kornelija | Ministry of Construction and Spatial Planning | Croatia | 31.07.2013 | 2 |
| Neubert, Marco | Leibniz-Institut für ökologische Raumentwicklung | Germany | 25.07.2013 | 3 |
| Pacher, Elisabeth | Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture | Austria | 31.07.2013 | 3 |
| Dolezelova, Lucie | Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Science, The Centre for Urban and Regional Research | Czech Republic | 31.07.2013 | 3 |
| Portik, Ágnes | Ministry of Rural Development | Hungary | 13.08.2013 | 3 |

⁵⁶ The originally nominated Mr. Binder (Energieagentur Burgenland, CEO) was – due to holidays – not available for an interview. He was replaced by Mr. Schneemann.

⁵⁷ The originally nominated Mrs. Crotta (Piedmont Region) was not available and was replaced by Mr. Bertolini.

| Title, Name | Organisation/Position | Country | Interview date | Relevant Priority |
|-----------------------------|--|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Krall, Attila ⁵⁸ | Gyula Forster National Centre for Cultural Heritage Management | Hungary | 02.08.2013 | 3 |
| Bruna, Zolin Maria | University of Venice Ca'Foscari, Department of Economics – GRETA Research & Consultancy Centre | Italy | 02.08.2013 | 3 |
| Sacco, Pierluigi | Professor of Cultural Economics, IULM University, Milan | Italy | 25.07.2013 | 3 |
| Boron, Grzegorz | City of Bydgoszcz | Poland | 30.07.2013 | 3 |
| Kriššák, Erik | Ministry of Culture | Slovakia | 12.08.2013 | 3 |
| Valjavec, Tatjana Orhini | Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment | Slovenia | 30.07.2013 | 3 |
| Vukšić, Ivna ⁵⁹ | Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection | Croatia | 06.08.2013 | 3 |
| Gather, Matthias | Fachhochschule Erfurt | Germany | 06.08.2013 | 4 |
| Lung, Ernst | Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology | Austria | 18.07.2013 | 4 |
| Pipa, Martin | Transport Research Centre/ Centrum dopravního výzkumu | Czech Republic | 01.08.2014 | 4 |
| Egyházy, Zoltán | Hungarian Transport Administration | Hungary | 08.08.2013 | 4 |
| Ferraza, Roberto | Ministry for Infrastructure and Transport DG for European Programmes | Italy | 05.08.2013 | 4 |
| Zathey, Maciej | Dłnoslaskie Voivodeship Marshal's Office | Poland | 22.08.2013 | 4 |
| Štefány, Peter | Government office of the SR | Slovakia | 30.07.2013 | 4 |
| Černe, Fedor | Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning | Slovenia | 01.08.2013 | 4 |
| Antolovic, Dražen | Ministry of Sea, Transport, Infrastructure | Croatia | 21.08.2013 | 4 |
| Tuffs, Richard | European Research and Regional Innovation Network (ERRIN) | EU level | 21.08.2013 | 1 |

⁵⁸ The originally nominated Andrea Nagy (Gyula Forster National Centre for Cultural Heritage Management) was not available and replaced by Mr. Krall as interview partner.

⁵⁹ The originally nominated Ana KOBASLIĆ (Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection) was not available and was replaced by Ivna Vukšić.

| Title, Name | Organisation/Position | Country | Interview date | Relevant Priority |
|------------------------------------|--|----------|----------------|-------------------|
| Panighetti, Stephano ⁶⁰ | European Commission, DG Energy, Unit C3 Energy Efficiency | EU level | 26.08.2013 | 2 |
| Erg, Boris ⁶¹ | IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature – South-East Europe Office | EU level | 22.08.2013 | 3 |
| von Hugo, Daniel | TEN-T Executive Agency | EU level | 13.08.2013 | 4 |

Interviews on different evaluation components – interviewees and schedule

| Title, Name | Organisation/Position | Interview date | Interview focus |
|---|---|----------------|-------------------------|
| Ebermann, Christophe Schönerklee-Grasser, Monika | CENTRAL EUROPE Programme / Joint Technical Secretariat | 15.11.2013 | Indicators |
| Barat, Mercedes | DG REGIO - Cooperation Unit | 12.11.2013 | Indicators |
| Stryczynski, Kai | DG REGIO Evaluation unit | 13.11.2013 | Indicators |
| Kring, Katerina | INTERACT | 14.11.2013 | Indicators |
| Breznik, Christiane | CENTRAL EUROPE Programme / Managing Authority | 14.11.2013 | Implementing provisions |
| Portelli, Helga | CENTRAL EUROPE Programme / Joint Technical Secretariat | 14.11.2013 | Implementing provisions |
| Gaifami, Andrea | SOGES S.p.A / Evaluator of on-going evaluation CE 2007-2013 | 12.11.2013 | Implementing provisions |
| Weinberger, Christian | DG Enterprise | 06.11.2013 | External coherence |
| Van Hugo, Daniel | TEN-T Executive Agency | 20.11.2013 | External coherence |
| Delcueille, Francois | DG Environment | 19.11.2013 | External coherence |
| Corpakis, Dimitri | DG Research | 28.11.2013 | External coherence |
| Jean-Marc Veninaux | DG Regio | 19.11.2013 | Integrated approach |

⁶⁰ The originally nominated Paul Hodson was on holidays, Mr. Panighetti – member of the same unit as Mr. Hodson – replaced him.

⁶¹ The originally nominated Luc Bas proposed Mr. Erg as replacement, due to his better knowledge of the central Europe area.